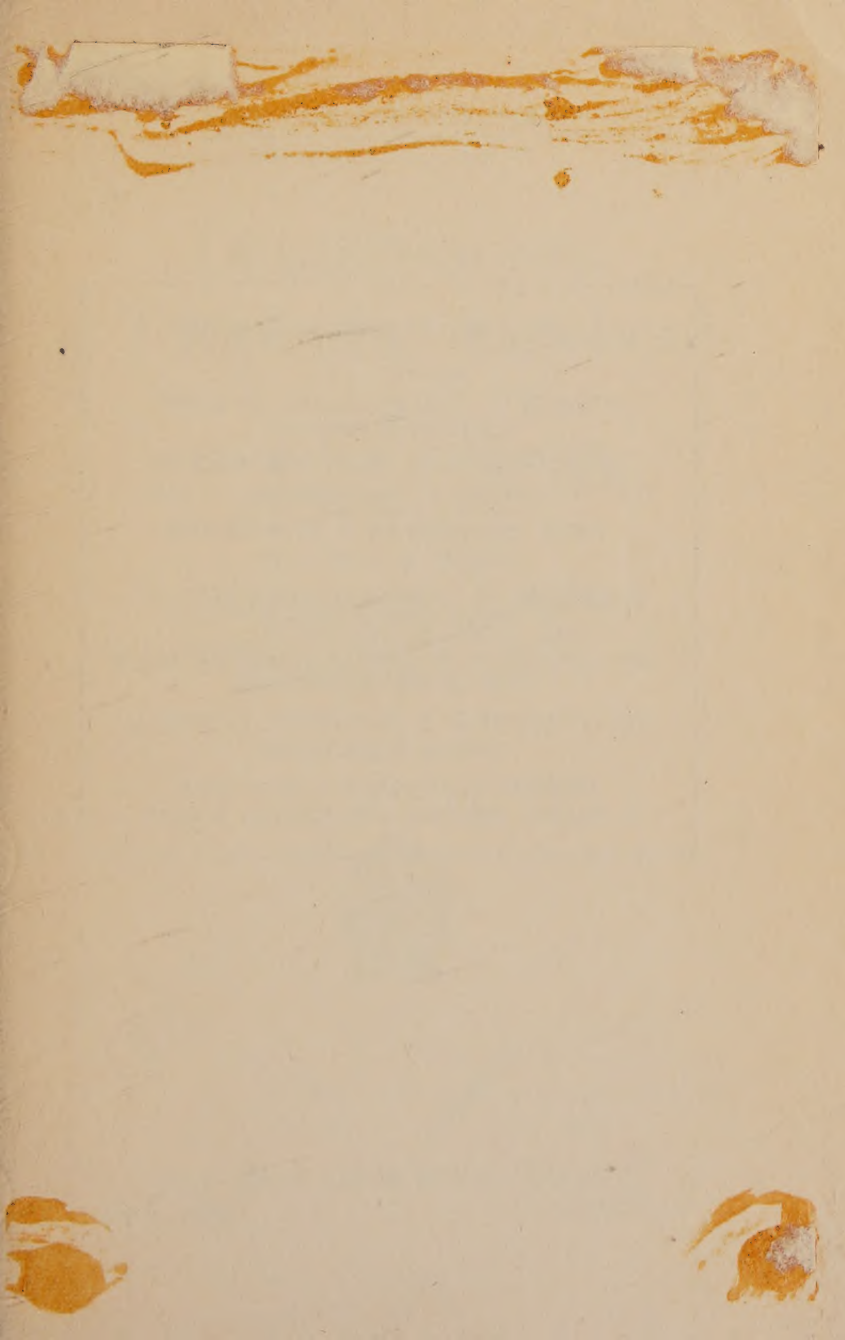


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A PROPHETIC LAWBOOK

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Deuteronomy, a Prophetic Lawbook

BY

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Approved by the Committee on Curriculum
of the Board of Sunday Schools of the
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FOREWORD

IN THIS brief study of a great book the emphasis has been laid upon two points—namely, (1) its prophetic spirit and (2) the relation of its teachings to the present day. The treatment of the book in the light of its history and the exposition in terms of life's larger perspectives are undertaken in the sincere belief that in these ways one most surely and most richly finds the book's religious value.

In depth of spiritual feeling this book stands quite alone among all the lawbooks of the Old Testament, and it shows many anticipations of the later teaching of the New Testament. This is not surprising in view of the knowledge Jesus evidently had of it. It is a book singularly akin, in many respects, to his own spirit.

The writer's aim will be abundantly fulfilled if this little book should kindle a desire on the part of those who study it for a deeper knowledge of that noble Scripture whose worst feature is its cumbersome Greek name—Deuteronomy.

LINDSAY B. LONGACRE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THERE is a large literature dealing with Deuteronomy and related subjects. The teacher should consult the standard Bible dictionaries wherever possible and also the related chapters in a good history of the Hebrew religion, such as that by the late J. P. Peters. Other references will be found in the following books, which are named as a minimum outfit:

One Volume Commentary on the Bible, Peake.

Introduction to the Pentateuch, Chapman, in Cambridge Bible Series.

Deuteronomy, Smith, in Cambridge Bible Series.

Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents, Kent, in Student's Old Testament Series.

Deuteronomy, Robinson, in New Century Bible Series.

CHAPTER I

BOOKS THAT MAKE HISTORY

2 Kings 22, 23

THERE are certain great documents, familiar to any schoolboy, which immediately remind us of historic movements or events of which they form a part, as, for instance, the Declaration of Independence, Luther's theses, the Magna Charta, and the Nicene Creed.

At first thought one might suppose that the Scriptures belong in such a group, but second thought reminds us that the epoch-making passages of Scripture so familiar to all Bible readers were spoken rather than written. The writing was done later by the followers of those who spoke. This is conspicuously true of the words of Jesus, who himself wrote nothing; nor did he, as far as we know, impose upon his disciples the duty of writing the words they had heard him speak. Vital as the prophetic and Christian writings are to us, it was not until long after the utterance of the words they preserve that they were regarded as important documents.

There is, however, one book of the Bible which forms a conspicuous exception to the general rule, and that is Deuteronomy. This is a document that appears not as a record after the event but as itself an event in its own right. It springs full-grown from a background of obscurity, and from the moment of its disclosure takes its place among the great books of all time. This position is due not only to its contents but equally to the remarkable religious movement occasioned by its appearance. It is one of the books that made history.

BOOKS THEN AND NOW

It is not easy to accustom oneself to the idea that the ancient Hebrews did not deal in any general way with

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documents. To-day books innumerable pour from our printing presses, and the rank and file of our people are able to read and write. But reading and writing have not always been within the reach of the common people. Not until very recent times have men even dreamed of public schools and universal education. Among the Hebrews as among the Greeks, Romans, and later Europeans the common people had neither means to buy nor learning to use writing materials or works already written. Reading, the possession of written rolls, writing, and correspondence were for kings, scholars, priests, and scribes—that is, for the few rather than for the many. The unlearned not only lacked the advantages of letters but often looked upon writings with an almost superstitious awe—as many an Oriental does to this day. It is against such a background that the appearance of this famous book is to be understood. To-day scholars and writers look forward with great eagerness to some important and long-promised work, whose appearance becomes an event in the world of letters. But here a great book appears without announcement. It contains matter affecting the most vital concerns of the nation. Like a bolt from the blue it strikes to the heart of king and people. It must have been a great occasion, as memorable as it was significant, when this book was read to the people assembled from far and near at the king's command. The story is told in 2 Kings 22 and 23. Few incidents mentioned in the Bible led to results as immediate, as revolutionary, and as far-reaching.

A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY

The dramatic appearance of the book is probably familiar to all readers of these notes; if not, stop here and read 2 Kings 22. 8-13! At this time Josiah was no longer a mere youth. Although placed upon the throne when only eight years old he was now in his twenty-sixth year, a man of high ideals and strong character.¹

¹ Consider the favorable comment of one of his personal friends (Jer. 22. 15, 16), where the "father" referred to is the king Josiah.

The effect of the book on the king was immediate and profound. Its words carried conviction, and the king was ready to obey its demands at once. Before doing so, however, and to make assurance doubly sure he directed Hilkiah and the others to "inquire of Jehovah" concerning "the words of this book that is found." Note that his inquiry is not about the author of the book nor when it was written but about the reliability of its contents. Huldah the prophetess was appealed to, and she confirmed the book most emphatically (22. 14-20). The king was no longer in doubt and he proceeded at once to put the new program into effect.

A general assembly of the people was called, and with great impressiveness and formality the book was read to them (23. 1-3). The king was evidently committed to it already, and the people accepted it. They could hardly have done otherwise unless they wanted to break with the king then and there. As later events proved, however, the people generally were by no means as ready as the king to adopt the new program. In the nature of the case the assembly had a more or less representative character. People who lived at a distance would in all probability have given (as we should say) their proxy to the elders of their community as their representatives. Distance from Jerusalem would naturally influence not only the attendance at this great meeting but willingness to abide by the program. The farther away people lived, the more attached they would be to their own local shrines, and the less ready to transfer the most important functions of their religion to Jerusalem; for nothing less than this, as we shall see further on, is what the new program really involved. These consequences would not appear at first nor all at once, and the great meeting moved easily and logically to its foregone conclusion. Religious enthusiasm was at a high pitch and carried all before it, including the elders who represented the distant parts of the country. It was not the only time when representatives at a convention adopted principles and programs which the people "back home" were not ready to indorse. But for the king, for the priests at Jerusalem, and doubtless for many of

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the people the book dominated the situation, epitomizing the great movement of which it was the inspiration and becoming practically a constitution for the nation.

OVERTHROWING THE FAITH OF SOME

The book's demands now put into effect by the king have already been referred to as constituting a new program. It was something more than a revival or a restoration. Its novelty is obscured at first by the book's own appeal to the authority of a distant past, but the impression conveyed by the narrative in Kings is that the demands were new ("our fathers"—22. 13). That they involved an entire reconstruction of the religious life of the people is clear from the long list of objects destroyed, shrines defiled, graves desecrated, and even priests executed.

The religious customs current in that day constituted what would to-day be called its orthodoxy. There cannot be the slightest doubt that for many of the people the objects destroyed were *bona fide* sacred objects, signs of deity's presence and favor, and means by which the worshiper supposed he could communicate with a higher power. The numerous shrines Josiah defiled had been—who knows how long?—the places where men and women sincerely believed that they could and should worship God acceptably. The priests that were slain were undoubtedly carrying on a form of religion which they and those who consulted them felt to be as valid and as virtuous as that which was observed at Jerusalem. Shrines are not halloved, priests are not sanctified, solemn rites are not observed, out of sheer perversity and malice. To many of those who looked with horror on the destruction wrought by Josiah's servants at town after town it must have seemed that the very foundations of faith and hope were being destroyed, *and they were—for them*. Even if their conception of religion was wrong, it was nevertheless *their* religion; and later revelation of its error or inadequacy, while justifying its dismissal or reformation, does not change the fact that it had supplied hope, comfort, and aspiration to those who, up to that time, had reached no higher form of faith.

The details of that destructive campaign have little interest for the casual Bible reader, but if one would take the trouble to write out a list of all that Josiah swept away (2 Kings 23. 4-20, 24) and would then read that list with an imagination and sympathy quickened by such suggestions as those offered above, he would realize that Josiah's great reformation had in it elements of tragedy as well as of triumph. Perhaps it was easy for him, as it is easy for us, to dismiss as idolatrous religious ideas and practices that, from our point of view, are erroneous. In the light of subsequent history it is clear that Josiah's reformation was a definite advance in religious life and thought; but it could hardly have been so recognized at the time except by those responsible for its enforcement, and it is doubtful if even they understood its whole significance.

The history this book made was not all negative and destructive. The book's importance is due to its positive, constructive work. Had this been lacking, it is doubtful whether the book itself would have survived; it certainly would never have held the place that now belongs to it. So far as those acts of Josiah are concerned which sprang immediately out of the appearance of the book, the deepest impression seems to have been made by the Passover that he and the people kept in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23. 21-23). These verses reflect the fact (above referred to) that the book involved a new program. There must have been something new about this Passover. Josiah did not command that it be kept in the good old way or according to the custom of the fathers or in the way it had been ordained at the beginning, but that it be kept "as it is written in this book." Especially significant is the fact that it was held in Jerusalem for all the people rather than at the homes or local shrines throughout the land (verse 23). Thus, in the same official and authoritative way that some practices were abolished, new ones were introduced. It is in this period that the doctrine arose among the Hebrews "that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4. 20), and this impressive observance of the Passover became a kind of formal

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inauguration of that historic belief. Here again the book makes history.

BOOKS VERSUS MEN

The impression given by the Scripture narrative is that these momentous events sprang spontaneously out of a book. In a sense this is quite true, yet it is a view that does not wholly satisfy a modern student. Such a student feels that while it is true as far as it goes, there are other factors in the case. He feels that *books* do not act except figuratively; *men* act. He realizes that nothing is done in the world of men without the action of human agents; and that where men are concerned, human motives and ambitions cannot be left out of account. So he asks in such a case as this who the men were that were behind the book. Highly as we may regard the king's integrity, his earnestness, and his force of character, it is hardly to be supposed that he could carry through such a sweeping program single-handed. There must have been sympathizers and cooperators who supported and encouraged the work. The Scripture narrative leaves no time between the discovery of the book and the commands of the king for any great number of men to have read the book and to have been convinced by it. They must have been ready, at least in spirit, before the book appeared. The authority of the book could hardly be due to its recognition as "Scripture," or it would not have been necessary to consult Huldah the prophetess, who, it should be noted, is not reported as saying anything on this phase of the subject. There must have been forces at work of which the Scripture makes no mention. Writers who could pass over eighteen years of Josiah's reign without a word (2 Kings 22. 1-3) are not the ones to be interested in such backgrounds as the modern student seeks, but there can be no doubt that such backgrounds were there if only they could be recovered.

CAN RELIGION BE ENFORCED?

A further question of a general nature is, To what extent can religion be imposed upon a people by com-

mand? Here is a case where royal authority rode ruthlessly to its goal, establishing a conformity as rigid as that of the Church of Rome. If it had been as successful as its reporters suggest, there would have been no occasion for the work of the prophets who came later. These prophets rebuked the people as vigorously as any who preached before the book appeared. So there must have been elements of weakness somewhere. Probably the greatest of these is the one that has wrecked many a religious movement since—namely, the attempt to make people religious by forms imposed from the outside. At this late date, when we are able in some degree to trace the course of Hebrew and Christian religious thought, it is not difficult to recognize the good side of Josiah's great work; but that is no reason why we should not learn from its failures. The influence of the book endures to this day, but even yet discrimination is necessary in any attempt to use its teachings. Jesus himself teaches us this discrimination. His words show him to have been deeply influenced by the book of Deuteronomy, but those parts which he quotes and whose spirit he reflects are those which appeal to inner motives rather than those which command formal acts; and it is these elements in the book which give it its abiding value.

FOR DISCUSSION

What is a chief element of difference between Deuteronomy and other Bible books?

What place did books have in the popular life of that day?

What relation had the book to current orthodoxy?

Why is the reference to the Passover significant?

How is the initial effect of the book to be accounted for?

What element of weakness was involved in this reform movement?

CHAPTER II

THE GOD WHO LOVED HIS PEOPLE

"Hear, O Israel:
Jehovah our God is one Jehovah."¹

Deuteronomy 8. 1-10; 10. 12-22

THESE words are central in Jewish thought down to the present day, and Jesus has made them central for Christian thought as well (Mark 12. 28-30). There are other elements in the book which are historically of great importance, elements that exerted a profound influence upon Israel; but none gripped the consciousness of the nation quite so firmly as this powerful statement of the nation's supreme distinction. Here is focused in one glowing sentence that exclusive relation of the Hebrew to his God which has been the race's undying glory. As an oak springs from an acorn, so it is not too much to say that this is the seed from which the whole book of Deuteronomy grew.

It has been said that the Bible is a book about God, and that while it may be studied in order to learn about Abraham or David or the fortunes of the Hebrews, its chief Subject and Hero is God himself; and this is a true saying. For ages men have asked, "What is God like?" The answer is difficult. We can only think of him in figures of speech. We catch only a glimpse of his garment's hem. More than this would dazzle and confuse us. Until our capacity increases far beyond its present scope, both mentally and spiritually, it will be impossible for us to grasp more than a fragment of the truth about God. Ready as he may be to reveal himself to men, he

¹ The margin of the American Standard Version adds three translations of these words to the one given in the text, making four possible translations in all. The one adopted here seems to represent most nearly the spirit and meaning of the original text.

is necessarily limited by man's capacity to receive the revelation. But from time to time men of clearer vision and deeper understanding arise, and to them—and through them—new aspects of the divine nature are revealed.

The Bible contains the records and testimonies of those who moved out beyond the ranks of their fellows in that search for God to which their larger natures impelled them. And it is their experiences and their discoveries of God, new to their own people but now set forth on the pages of Scripture, which give the Bible its unique place and value.

If this is true in a general way of the Bible as a whole, it is strikingly true of the book of Deuteronomy in particular. This book has a new message about God—new, that is, to the people for whom it was first written. The Bible student does not always find it easy to appreciate the novelty with which these messages came to those who first heard them, because the student himself has been familiar with them from his youth up. One must in imagination transport himself back into a day when men did not know God as this book proclaims him, when they had not learned some of those gracious aspects of the divine character which this book so richly sets forth; and then he must try to realize what kindlings of heart and soul would spring from such revelations as these. The book was creative as few books in history have been, and all the later biblical writers reflect its influence in one way or another.

What is this new revelation of God which Deuteronomy proclaims? It is twofold: (1) Jehovah is the only God for Israel; and (2) he loves his people.

JEHOVAH THE ONLY GOD

We are so accustomed to the idea of the Hebrews as the people of Jehovah that it is a matter of some surprise to discover how loosely the idea was held at first, and that it called for the explicit statement given in Deuteronomy. One does not have to read his Bible very carefully, however, to find that the Hebrews are consistently

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represented (at least down to the time of the Babylonian Captivity) as being more or less in the habit of falling away from Jehovah. It is true that they are represented as entering Canaan as champions of Jehovah, and that they regarded him not only as their Leader in the conquest but as the One whose battles they fought; yet they seem to have felt that loyalty to Jehovah in these undertakings did not clash with a certain recognition of other gods. Jehovah being thought of as having his special seat at Sinai (Judg. 5. 4, 5; 1 Kings 19. 8), it would not seem unnatural or disloyal, in matters that concerned the new land they had entered, to acknowledge the gods of that land. This would be all the easier in view of the widespread belief that each land had its own deities. The result was that, while Jehovah was theoretically the God of the Hebrews, the people had little hesitation in worshipping other gods, as one might say, "on the side."

This situation was faced and challenged by Elijah (1 Kings 18), who made exclusive allegiance to Jehovah a matter of national honor and religious duty. His voice died away, however, without having wrought any significant change in the minds of the people at large. They soon fell back into their old ways.

The matter was still further complicated by the custom of regarding many different sacred places (trees, rocks, springs, etc.) as places where Jehovah should be worshiped. Students of church history are familiar with the ways the Virgin Mary has been worshiped at different shrines, and how there gradually arose traditions that "Our Lady" of such and such a place was especially to be invoked for special needs. Theoretically there was only one Virgin Mary, but practically there were as many different Marys as there were shrines. The same kind of thing existed among the Hebrews. Indeed, it was regarded as a divine command that Jehovah should be worshiped at various places (Exod. 20. 24); and the many shrines led easily to the idea of many Jehovahs.¹

It is against *this multiplicity of Jehovahs*, as well as

¹ Consider the Jehovah (Lord) and the El (God) of different places in Gen. 22. 14; 33. 20; 35. 7; Judg. 6. 24; Amos 8. 14.

against foreign gods, that Deuteronomy protests; and it is in the light of this protest that one appreciates the true purpose of the first and second commandments (Deut. 5. 6-8). These words are not proclamations of abstract principles; they are addressed to a definite community, and they rebuke particular errors current at the time. In a day when people generally and in all sincerity believed in the existence of many gods, and in a day when the Hebrews had practically divided their one Jehovah into many, this book calls upon the people to forsake all other deities, to worship Jehovah only, and to do away with the images and shrines that tended to subdivide him (see, for instance, 2 Kings 23. 4-15). This was distinctly a new teaching about God and forms the most definite and significant step toward monotheism which had been taken up to that time.

JEHOVAH LOVES HIS PEOPLE

How does God feel toward us? What motive or aim prompts him to act as he does? Does he care at all? An answer to these questions or to any one of them would necessarily have a profound influence on one's view of life and conduct. It would give him a basis for an understanding of the past, a principle by which to act in the present, and an idea of how to face the future. If such questions had been answered from the beginning or if they had never been raised, the book of Deuteronomy would never have been written. But as the religious teachers of the Hebrews looked more and more deeply into the truth of things they not only raised such questions but courageously attempted to find answers for the questions they themselves had raised.

Deuteronomy gives one of these answers, and in so doing marks an important step in man's progress toward a fuller knowledge of God. It gathers up into one clear and definite proclamation the earlier occasional voices that had already begun to utter the new word "Love"—a word that in this connection was so new and yet so true! "Nowhere else in the Pentateuch," writes George Adam Smith, "has the love of God to man such free course as in

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Deuteronomy.” This new revelation of love comes to direct expression in such words as “because he loved thy fathers” (4. 37) and “because Jehovah loveth you” (7. 8); but its presence is seen not only in these direct statements but throughout the book.

Turn, for example, to 8. 1-10 and 10. 12-22 and note throughout the tone of warm affection which alone could explain such promises, such reminders, such appeals. The new home the Hebrews had found in Canaan is here seen as a gift of affection bestowed by a great Lover. Not the least striking is the statement in 8. 5. Frequently throughout the book the hardships attending the wilderness journeys are represented as corrections and punishments. As such it might easily be supposed that they were incurred through God’s enmity toward the disobedient. Doubtless this explanation was held by some. But in the words of this verse a shaft of light falls across the dark path. The punishments are signs of Jehovah’s fatherly providence and of his purpose of affection. “As a man disciplines *his son*”—that is, out of desire for the son’s best welfare—so Jehovah had disciplined his people.

In this connection it is worth while to notice an expression that is so familiar to all Bible readers that its use in this book—and probably its original use in this characteristic sense—is often overlooked—namely, the familiar “Jehovah our [thy, your] God,” even better known in the King James translation: “The LORD our God.” The frequency of this expression in Deuteronomy and its infrequency in the rest of the Pentateuch cannot be an accident. It springs out of the spirit that produced this book in the first place; and the spirit that uttered itself in such expressions as these was the spirit of a religion at once profound, eager, and creative. These words have been taken up and repeated by Jews and Christians ever since, uttering as they do one of the fundamental convictions of our faith. In their light the past has purpose and the future hope. When we enter into the experience out of which such words first sprang we join the true fellowship of the children of God. Not alone for the ancient Hebrews but for all who should come after them

did these distant prophets seek and find the divine presence of a God who loved his people.

THE LIFE PRECEDES THE LETTER

It would not be fair to the book of Deuteronomy to regard its message as reaching no farther back than the page on which it is written. Books imply writers; and before books can be written, their message must have arisen as a fact of experience in the hearts and lives of those who wrote. When it was said that one of the book's most characteristic expressions sprang from a spirit of earnest religion, it was not supposed for a moment that religion can exist apart from people. Books may *report* religion but they cannot *experience* it, and if this book contains an epoch-making revelation of the character of God, it is because that revelation arose in some devout heart or hearts as a spiritual discovery made in the course of a life of practical and profound piety. Not books but men are "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1. 21). Whatever else we may or may not know about the origin of this book, we are sure that before it could have been written there must have been those who could say with truth, long before Paul said it, "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5. 5).

While and because this is a religious experience, it is not an experience reserved exclusively for the writers of the Bible nor for the Christians to whom Paul wrote. It is for all who truly desire it. Not only, however, is it *possible*, it is *necessary* for anyone who would truly understand and appreciate the lives and words of those to whom it is already a reality. The book of Deuteronomy is not merely a mass of words, not only a collection of pious statements; it is the rich fruit of profound religious experience, and it should be more generally recognized that one cannot take the Bible as seriously as its writers gave it until he take his own personal religion as seriously as the Bible writers took theirs. If he feels this to be impossible, it is still possible for him to give himself unreservedly, according to his ability, to Him "from whom

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all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." In so doing he can prepare himself for such an appreciation of the book of Deuteronomy as will, on the one hand, emancipate him from a slavery to the letter, or any false reverence for traditional associations, and, on the other hand, enrich his soul with the consciousness that between the lines of the book he hears the voices of those who preceded him along the path of righteousness. In their light he too may see light.

GOD'S LOVE NEWLY DISCOVERED

It would be difficult to account for the emphasis and reiteration the book gives to this view of God had the idea been generally accepted already. It is true of all creative ideas that when they are first proclaimed they are asserted and reasserted, emphasized and reemphasized. This is necessary just because of their novelty and their importance. On the other hand, it is a fair conclusion that a time when some significant teaching is brought into special prominence is probably the time when that teaching is first making its way toward recognition and acceptance. This is the reason the idea we are considering is so definitely connected with the book of Deuteronomy. It needs but little imagination to catch the feeling of novelty in 6. 4-9; 8. 11-20; 13. 1-5; 26. 16-19; indeed, the whole book breathes this spirit of freshness and originality.

There are many advantages in being familiar with the Bible, in having heard it, and having read it over and over again; but there is one serious disadvantage: the frequent repetition becomes mechanical and tends to hide the living power of the familiar words. Above all, it becomes difficult to imagine the impression made by these words upon those who heard them *for the first time*. They are so *old* to us that we forget they were ever new. But every word in the Bible was new when first uttered, and our appreciation of the Bible teachings depends in a considerable degree on our understanding of what they meant to those who had never heard such ideas proclaimed before.

To those first hearers the idea had value not alone for its own sake but equally for the way it helped to clear up their whole view of the past. Up to this time their past history had been little more than a collection of heroic narratives telling of wars, of heroes, and of conquests. These were not felt to have any inner meaning. They were connected with each other simply because they followed each other in point of time and because they dealt with the same nation. But what did they all *mean*? Did they mean anything more than waves on the surface of an uncharted sea? Yes, as if the divine voice had again said, "Let there be light," this word of Deuteronomy gives the Hebrews an interpretation of their own history. Order is now seen where before there had been confusion. Through all the past is seen the guiding hand of God: "the Lord our God," the God of Israel, who loved his people.

FOR DISCUSSION

Why is it so difficult to know what God is like?

What made the biblical writings seem so new when they appeared?

Why would the Hebrews worship other gods than Jehovah?

What was the point of Elijah's appeal?

How would sacred places and objects influence the popular idea of Jehovah?

How does Deuteronomy emphasize a new thought of God?

Why is the expression "Jehovah our God" significant?

What relation had the book to experience?

What ground is there for supposing this idea of God's love to be new at that time?

CHAPTER III

WILLING OBEDIENCE

"Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (6. 5).

Deuteronomy 6

FROM time immemorial men have had some kind of religion. They have moved on from the crude religions of primitive days to the idea of one Supreme Being. As they have learned to observe more and more of the facts of life and have begun to reason about these facts they have thought more and more about God, how he should be worshiped, and why. One of the most significant aspects of the book of Deuteronomy is its contribution to these ideas. It deals not only with the obedience man owes to God but also with reasons and motives for this obedience.

Why should we serve God? Many religious persons who have never raised such a question on their own account are interested in an answer. Of course, for some people religion is a more or less customary and respectable affair, which has their approval but not their enthusiasm. They care nothing for whys and wherefores and rather resent any demand for exacting service. There are others, however, who take religion more seriously. They dare to ask, "Why?" and they seek serious answers. Here is the place for a study of Deuteronomy. It is a book that gives some of these answers. Not only is Jehovah represented as the God who loved his people, but a further and equally searching question is raised as to the proper attitude of the people toward this loving God.

It might be thought at first that no question could have a more easy and obvious answer. Do we not read in the New Testament, "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4. 19)? Yes, in the *New Testament*. But in

the days of Deuteronomy the idea that Jehovah loved his people was *one* new idea, and the idea that the people should love Jehovah was a *second* new idea. It is hard enough for men to adjust themselves to one new idea at a time, and more than doubly hard to grapple with two at once. Indeed, a moment's thought will show that the second idea does not immediately and obviously follow from the first.

God's love for me may (but it may not) express itself in a way that necessarily awakens love on my part for him. Many a child feels doubts from time to time as to whether his parents, who so positively assert their love for him, want love in return or whether they do not simply want obedience and their own satisfaction. If our parents—or God—seem to deal with us in a way that is harsh and exacting, if we do not see any reason for our difficulties and disappointments, if we are unable to discern any purpose of love on the part of those who are apparently in control, why should there be any response of love from us? We may see perfectly good reasons for doing what we are told, based on the authority of a higher power, or reasons that grow out of prospects of our own advantage, but which by no means necessarily kindle in us that mysterious emotion we call love. By the time the book of Deuteronomy appeared, there was no doubt among the people regarding the *duty* of obedience to Jehovah; but the idea that obedience should spring from a *motive*, and a motive that connected itself with the most sacred and powerful ties of human relationships, was so new that its many bearings on life and religion could only gradually be understood. The fact that the two ideas are usually connected in Deuteronomy need not obscure their separation in fact.

AN ANCIENT CREED

Deut. 6. 4-9 is one of the most famous passages in the Old Testament. It stands at the beginning of a brief selection of Scripture known by the Hebrews as the "Shema" (the Hebrew word for "Hear"). The Shema "has been for many ages the first bit of the Bible which

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Jewish children have learned to say and to read, just as it has for many ages formed the confession of faith among all members of the brotherhood of Judaism." But its opening statement ceased to be the exclusive possession of Judaism when, through the significant use Jesus made of it (Matt. 22. 37f.; Luke 10. 27f.) it passed over into the Christian faith as one of the foundation stones laid by its Founder.

As this passage appears in chapter 6, its setting is as appropriate as it is characteristic. The chapter opens (verses 1-3) with an impressive statement of the importance of the "commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances" (a characteristic phrase of Deuteronomy) previously rehearsed. They are to be learned and obeyed, and obedience will bring rich reward.

The expression "fear Jehovah" (verse 2) is another phrase characteristic of Deuteronomy. The words are so familiar that the real Deuteronomic content is sometimes disregarded. The idea of "fear" is meant here in the sense of reverence and awe, not of dread or horror. The expressions "the fear of Jehovah," and "one that feareth God" are simply the Hebrew ways of saying "religion" or "one who is religious." The task of finding and using English expressions that mean to us what the Hebrew expressions meant to the Hebrews is not always accomplished by direct translation and in many cases is not nearly as easy as one might suppose. Here we have one of the many cases where a Hebrew phrase has a meaning quite different from that which the single words, translated into English, would suggest to an English-speaking reader. Throughout the Old Testament generally the man who "fears God" is the one *we* should speak of as "really religious."

Not only is the Israelite to love Jehovah, but he is to keep Jehovah constantly in mind. There is something pathetic in the way men seize on the formal and mechanical and lose sight of what is spiritual and essential. This has happened in the way the Jews have taken verses 8 and 9. The meaning seems to be that the Hebrews should keep these teachings ever before them, and that their

homes should be dedicated to Jehovah and his commands. But in their desire to obey everything literally the later Jews hit upon the idea of writing out these words on small pieces of parchment and then actually tying these bits of parchment upon arms and heads and fastening them to doorposts.

This does not mean that all Jews ignored the spirit of the words, for many Jews were (and are) as earnest and as honest in such matters as any Christian; but it means that it is possible to lay such stress on certain acts that one may "go through the motions" without really paying much attention to the spirit and the meaning. Many Christians recite the Lord's Prayer with very little thought of what they are saying, and the same sort of thing is probably true of the way many Christians observe baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other offices of our beautiful, significant ritual. The sin is not especially Jewish; it is human and appears in all religions.

But there was nothing mechanical in the religion of those who wrote these words in the first place. They must have sprung from hearts full of the love the words proclaim. The terms "heart," "soul," "might," are piled up as though to leave no loophole for escape from the all-embracing earnestness of this new devotion. Here life and religion are one. Life itself becomes a sacrament, poured forth upon the altar of love.

It is a high ideal—too fine and pure for successful realization as yet. The world is too eager for the small satisfactions of selfishness, too ready to meet the claims of religion by empty recitations or by hanging mottoes on the wall. But here and there one finds men and women who have somehow learned the secret of this beautiful, triumphant life; and these confirm the visions of the saints of old, renewing the testimony, often faint but never quite silenced, that man's highest joy and richest life are found in harmony with God.

RELIGION AND CULTURE

The deadening influence on religion of ease and comfort is significantly set forth in verses 10-15. The culture of

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Canaan, in contrast with the simpler life of the desert, undoubtedly exerted a strong influence upon the life of the Hebrews, and their religion could not escape the effects of the new environment. As compared with the wilderness experiences the life of Canaan offered both variety and stability. The simple fare and fashions of the desert gave way to cultivated fields, vineyards, and fruit trees. The uncertain supply of water gave way to springs and cisterns. The tents were replaced by well-built houses. Many must have been the temptations to "forget Jehovah."

Was this peculiar to the Hebrews? Is it not an experience familiar to us all that as one moves on to higher salaries, more conveniences, richer culture, he becomes aware of the waning of his religious enthusiasm? Is there a native antagonism between religion and culture? Is there justification for the warnings sometimes given young people that learning is dangerous to religion? It would seem so until it is recalled that the great religious leaders from Isaiah to Wesley have been men of culture and education; that it was a prophet who said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4. 6); and that without culture and scholarship of the finest kind we should have no worthy architecture for our churches, no hymns and music for our worship, and no Bible in a language we could understand. The dangers of culture are obvious; but so are the tragedies of ignorance, and both are surmountable.

One of the most striking aspects of the book of Deuteronomy is that it presents such warnings as these in a persuasive, argumentative way rather than as direct and arbitrary prohibitions. It is at once the glory and the weakness of true religion that it must be evoked rather than enforced, awakened from within rather than imposed from without. This is clear when we stop to think of it; but it raises difficulties that seem almost insurmountable. How can one be *made* religious? By telling him what he must do? This may be a help and a guide, but the chief thing is that the person should be actuated by his spirit's consent and desire. This cannot be compelled; it must be invited and aroused. It is this advanced conception of

the true character of religion which seems to underlie much of the book of Deuteronomy. It is the true prophetic spirit that springs from a consciousness of God's voice within.

Deuteronomy is equally clear that this religious spirit inevitably expresses itself in deeds. This, in fact, is Deuteronomy's contribution to the idea of true obedience—namely, that it should be the direct expression of the inner spirit. This inner spirit, from the Deuteronomic standpoint, is especially one of gratitude and appreciation for all that Jehovah had done for his people. There is something profoundly moving in the simple way Deuteronomy sets forth memory, gratitude, and love as a kind of three-fold root, of which this eager obedience is the natural fruit. Later religious thought has advanced no further in this particular direction (John 14. 21-24).

RELIGION IN THE HOME

The chapter could have no more fitting conclusion than the picture in verses 20-25 of the pious home where the divine Presence is so constantly acknowledged, and a loving obedience so constantly offered that the curious questions of the growing child only give a fresh opportunity to rehearse the story of Jehovah's loving care and the grateful devotion of his people.

We do not always realize how quietly yet how convincingly the atmosphere of the home colors the whole thinking of the children. They see very quickly the difference between what we say and what we do and take their cue from the acts and the spirit that show what we really think rather than from the occasional words which we merely repeat. There are too many homes where, for instance, the Bible and the church are spoken of with a certain respect, but where the Bible is read but little and almost never talked of as if it were a subject of any vital interest, and where almost anything is allowed to interfere with church affairs. In such homes children are never aroused to ask questions in the spirit of verse 20. They realize (although the parents might never actually say

such a thing) that religion is a side issue, not to be taken so seriously that it interferes with everyday life.

Such a spirit would be utterly foreign to the writers of this chapter. From earliest days their children would have been taught not only in the way of memory and recitation but in the far more effective way of example. The children would have seen that their parents were taking their own, grown-up, religion diligently and in all seriousness, and with the natural bent of the child to imitate his elders, the children would "catch" the atmosphere of devotion at a time when the most lasting impressions are received.

It would be interesting to have accurate information concerning answers parents give or are able to give to-day to the questions children ask on religious topics. It is certain that many parents have nothing but the vaguest answers. We to-day are not so convinced of care on God's part that we wish to keep that wonderful story in the forefront of our consciousness. We are not clear in our minds as to what God definitely requires of us. We are not eager for a righteousness that must express itself in steadfast obedience. The whole attitude is foreign to the spirit of the times.

What shall we do about it? The answer is obvious as soon as stated. We should take our religion as seriously as these writers did theirs. This does not mean that we should take their identical precepts and impose these inflexibly upon ourselves and on our children, but that, in the spirit of these writers and seeking God with similar earnestness, we should use our best abilities, as they used theirs, in fashioning for our own day a life of gratitude, faithfulness, and love built upon our own devotion and its discoveries. Just as those early saints sifted out from their past history many precious principles for further application, so shall we to-day, from later and higher vantage ground, treasure the enduring validities of earlier teachings. And just as those saints looked out upon their new world of life and thought and claimed it for God, sure that they must find him there or nowhere, advancing new conceptions of God and duty as they saw new fields for

faith and practice, so shall we to-day, with our richer heritage and our wider horizons, claim our modern world, with its modern facts and its modern thoughts, for God in terms our own times suggest, permit, and demand.

FOR DISCUSSION

Why does God's love for us not immediately awaken our love for him?

Give the beginning of the "Shema" (pronounce *e* quite short, *a* as in "far," and accent the second syllable).

What is to be understood as the meaning of the expression "fear Jehovah"?

Why was Deut. 6. 8, 9 taken so mechanically?

How did this mechanical observance violate the spirit of the passage?

How would the life in Canaan weaken loyalty to Jehovah?

What is Deuteronomy's view of the real source of the good life?

What picture does Deuteronomy give of religion in the home?

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY CITY

Deuteronomy 12, 13

THE two long addresses which make up the first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy (1-4; 5-11) are only introductory to the main body of the book (12-25). This, as its title (12. 1) states, includes the specific "statutes and ordinances" that constitute the long section now commonly called the "Deuteronomic Code."

Of the many requirements laid down in this book none has had a more abiding influence on Judaism than the one that holds the place of honor at the beginning of this code. Yet it is one that Christianity was compelled not only to ignore but definitely to abolish. It proved to be one of the "old wineskins" that broke under the strain of the "new wine" of the gospel. It is interesting not only on account of its place in Jewish thought but even more in the illustration it offers of the way an inspired teaching, which in its day was new and, indeed, revolutionary, became central in the religious life of a nation, only to be superseded at a later day by the fuller message of that nation's greatest Teacher.

This important "statute" was the one establishing Jerusalem as the sole shrine of Jehovah, the only place where sacrifices, offerings, vows, and "holy things" (12. 26, 27) should be presented. The thought of Jerusalem as the Holy City has so long been taken for granted as a part of the Hebrew religion that one has to read his Bible again to verify the fact that it was not until the half century preceding the Exile that this theory became an official part of the Hebrew religious system.

Of course, Jerusalem could not be the Holy City of the Hebrews until it came into their possession. And this did not happen until the days of David. For possibly three

hundred years the Hebrews had been endeavoring, with only gradual success, to establish themselves in the land of Canaan (Judg. 1). During that extended period they had managed to possess themselves of enough of the country for it to be spoken of, more and more, as "the land of the Hebrews." But the city of Jerusalem remained unconquered until approximately 1000 B. C., when David "took the stronghold of Zion" (2 Sam. 5. 7). Thereafter it was known as "the city of David" and became the national capital, David having succeeded in welding the nation into a fairly united whole.

When, upon the death of Solomon, the Hebrews living north of Jerusalem resumed their independence, refusing to remain subject to the king of the little tribe of Judah in the south, the religious and national center of gravity shifted to the north, where it remained until Samaria fell before the Assyrian forces in 722 B. C. Of course, during that time (approximately two hundred years) Jerusalem could claim no special importance outside the tribal territory of Judah. After Samaria fell, however, the tribe of Judah was all that remained of the nation as such, and Judah's chief city, Jerusalem, the city of David, automatically became the national metropolis. Not until that time were conditions such that it could become the religious headquarters, the central shrine, of the Hebrew religion. Even then it did not immediately become the *only* place where Jehovah's sacrifices could properly be offered.

When the Hebrews first began to force their way into the Promised Land, they erected altars and offered sacrifices to Jehovah at various places (Exod. 20. 24), the number of these naturally increasing with the extent of territory occupied. We find these shrines at Dan (Judg. 18. 30), at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1. 9), at Carmel (1 Kings 18), at Bethel (Amos 7. 10-13), and numerous other places. Indeed, until the appearance of this Deuteronomic statute there seems to have been no thought of confining the formal worship of Jehovah to a single place. For instance, Elijah, who demanded that the Hebrews worship Jehovah only, lamented over the ruin of many altars,

restored the one at Carmel, and never mentioned Jerusalem. Now, however, in the Deuteronomic days, it was felt that sacrifices to Jehovah should be offered at this one place only, the place "which he had chosen"; and in the reform movement directed by Josiah this was one of the central features. From this time forward Jerusalem became to all Jews the Holy City, "the place where men ought to worship" (John 4. 20).

OTHER GODS

One reason for this concentration of worship in Jerusalem is suggested by the further contents of chapters 12 and 13. With the repeated emphasis upon the one place of worship go the positive command to worship Jehovah only and the negative command to avoid all other deities. The designation of the one and only shrine is evidently part of the larger purpose to insure the worship of Jehovah only. The one Holy City thus became the outward and visible sign of the one Jehovah.

As one reads the biblical denunciations of "other gods" and the oft-repeated warnings against "going after" them he finds it difficult to sympathize with the situation. To the modern mind it appears to be such a relic of ancient superstition that it is not felt to have any contact with actual life. Closely akin to the subject—and, indeed, a part of it—is the question of idols and the use of images in religion.

But are we really so far from these things to-day? Consider the facts familiar to all travelers—of the belief in good and bad spirits in China, India, Africa, and, in fact, all over the world. The widespread belief in good or bad luck in our own country is only a faded-out survival of the belief in invisible powers who must not be offended. In a church paper just at hand comment is made that in a certain country, in cases of sickness, "instead of giving the patient or victim quinine or aconite they send for a priest with his hideous mask to exorcise the retribution that has overtaken the culprit." Except for the "hideous mask" there is here something strikingly similar to the belief, right here in our own country, that certain "healers"

are better than medical doctors. Indeed, a thriving cult has been established among us which regards physicians of all kinds as operating in a field of mortal error. It holds that prayer and faith effectually deny and thus abolish disease, and that the idea of medicine is itself a disease. They use no "hideous masks," but they repudiate medicine as emphatically as the people referred to in the quotation just given.

Belief in the powers of the saints is held by many Romanists. If one loses something, he appeals to one saint; if he is in another kind of trouble, he appeals to another saint; and so on. The point is not whether we, as Protestants, share these beliefs, but the fact that many Christians in our own land to-day sincerely hold them. In addition to these facts there are the foreign religions, "other gods," from India, Persia, and elsewhere, which are represented in this country, and which prove both attractive and convincing to some people.

It is easy to dismiss with a wave of the hand such ideas as these, as if those who hold them were people of no importance, and as if the ideas themselves were not worth considering; but this is only to imitate the ostrich who puts his head in the sand and denies the existence of what he refuses to see. There are many "other gods" to-day, and they are invoked for the same reasons that the "other gods" were sought in the Deuteronomic days—that is, to get health, prosperity, and peace. The temptations that beset the Hebrews to "go after other gods" were real temptations, and not a mere stupid or blind perversity. They sincerely believed that these "other gods" were able to bestow the things that men most desire and turned to these gods for their benefits as honestly and as earnestly as men turn to other cults for similar benefits to-day (see Jer. 44. 15-19).

The expression "other gods" should not disguise nor obscure the fact that those ancient Hebrews were doing nothing different in principle from what your next-door neighbor or mine is doing now; and the feeling of the Deuteronomists was clearly akin to that of the ardent Protestant who finds a member of his family turning

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Roman Catholic, of the Jew who finds his daughter marrying a Gentile, or of an orthodox Christian who finds his closest friend turning Buddhist.

KILL HIM! (13. 6-18)

The punishments imposed upon those who forsook Jehovah fill us with horror. They seem not only out of all proportion to the offense but of a kind that has no particular relation to the sort of offense committed, and, worst of all, to reflect a spirit in God himself which is utterly incompatible with the dictates of humanity and the teachings of Jesus. Can a man have kinder feelings than his Maker? It is no wonder that such passages have caused much confusion in the minds of those who wished to be loyal both to their fellow men and to the Scriptures, just as they afforded most convenient material to those who wished to exploit the apparent inconsistencies of a book declared to be the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

This confusion could not be dispelled as long as men held the (unscriptural) theory that the Bible is a unit, consistent in all its parts. This theory has held its place so long that many Christians are still under its influence, and many believe that it is actually taught in the Bible. A less dogmatic study of the Bible—one that does not decide beforehand just what shall or what shall not be learned—has thrown a light upon such terrible passages as these (see also Josh. 6 ; 7 ; 1 Sam. 15) and, indeed, upon the whole Bible, which places such questions in a quite different perspective and gives them a quite different character. One is then ready to see that the ideas men had of God in the days of Joshua were less spiritual—and in that degree less true—than the ideas they were taught by such later and greater prophets as, for instance, Isaiah.

This means that any teaching about God or duty is to be connected with and interpreted by the particular stage of understanding men have reached at that time in matters of religion. As prophet after prophet arose, each one had his contribution to make and gradually led men to larger knowledge of God and of the divine character. While

God himself does not change, men's ideas about him change, and the views of one age are corrected step by step in the ages that follow.

Such dreadful punishments as these are part and parcel of a view of God which had not yet seen him as one who desired not "the death of the wicked" (Ezek. 18. 23). They are no more final utterances of unchanging truth than is the statute that would make Jerusalem the only place where God can be acceptably worshiped. In those days men supposed that this kind of thing would be pleasing to their deity if he were neglected, and they went about it ruthlessly. Jesus has shown us that God has very different feelings toward his erring children; and while we can look impartially and with admiration upon the devotion and purpose of the cruel commands anciently obeyed in the name of Jehovah we can lay aside every feeling of obligation of being bound by them. God has "spoken unto us in *his* Son" (Heb. 1. 2).

Unfortunately many Christians for centuries felt themselves authorized to act upon this command, as if Christ had never lived, or as if Paul had never sung his immortal hymn of love (1 Cor. 13); and devout believers felt that by torturing and killing heretics they were doing God service (John 16. 2). It is time for us reverently to recognize the place in history not only of the people themselves but *of their ideas as well*, doing thus in our thought what God has already done in fact. This will give us a truer appreciation of what those inspired teachers really accomplished, it will place them in their proper relation to those who preceded them as well as those who followed, and it will save us from the error of supposing that we are to be bound by ideas long since corrected or canceled by later teachers who are as fully inspired as those whose teachings they correct.

ONE VIEW OF SIN

The Scriptures portray the gradual growth of the Hebrews in things of the spirit, and their great teachers are conspicuous for the resolute way they moved on from traditional ideas to new ones whose very novelty was one

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of the chief obstacles to their immediate acceptance. These Deuteronomic protests are raised against customs that had long been in existence. They are attempts to correct a practice sanctioned by generations of use. But these leaders take no account of the inertia of habit and propose to change everything overnight. This is what leads them to denounce as sin any persistence in the practice they would overthrow. When reduced to lowest terms it is rather surprising to discover that the people are charged with sin simply *for doing what they used to do after a better way had been revealed*. The worship at many shrines ordained in earlier days (Exod. 20. 24-26) is rebuked here in Deuteronomy. But even more significant is the way the Temple and the ritual generally are increasingly discounted by the great prophets in order to lead the way toward a more spiritual and ethical view of religion (see Amos 5. 21-27; Isa. 1. 10-17; Jer. 7. 1-15).

There could be no better indication that we should be ready to accept and to obey later teachings, especially where they supersede earlier ones, than in the history of the Deuteronomic concentration of worship at the Holy City. It was thought that departures from Jehovah could be prevented and devotion to him assured by bringing the whole matter under one roof, so to speak. What was the result? The same that follows every attempt to control an inner spirit by an outward form. In an incredibly short time the faithful observance of the form is regarded as a complete and sufficient indication of the spirit of which it is supposed to be the expression. And this is what happened in the case of the Deuteronomic position. Despite the moving exhortations to love and gratitude, the attempts to specify in detail the various ways in which this spirit should express itself led inevitably to a concentration of interest on the acts, offerings, and other outward observances that could be seen and done. This occurred so rapidly that Jeremiah, who lived during and beyond the period of Josiah's reform, soon saw and condemned the failure of the people to follow the more spiritual path the book of Deuteronomy had marked out

(Jer. 7. 1-11). This great book is thus seen to be a true reflection of the life of the people and, indeed, of all people, combining profoundly spiritual ideas with others so mechanical and inadequate that they had to be wholly superseded. To estimate it truly we should ask ourselves some searching questions about our own views regarding, say, holy cities, holy buildings, or the treatment of heretics.

FOR DISCUSSION

What was one of Deuteronomy's most original requirements?

What was the importance of the great event that happened in 722 B. C.?

What evidence exists that the Hebrews were accustomed to worship Jehovah at different places?

What parallel is there to-day with the old idea of "other gods"?

What was the Deuteronomic treatment for heresy?

Does something of this same spirit exist to-day?

CHAPTER V

THE HOLY PEOPLE

Deuteronomy 14. 22 to 15. 18

THE title "Holy People" (Deut. 14. 2, 21) might serve as a title for the whole book of Deuteronomy, for it contemplates nothing less than a nation wholly devoted to Jehovah. The section here considered does not by any means include all that the book has to say on the subject, but it is so characteristic in this respect that it may well be used as representing the whole. We shall find here, as, indeed, throughout the book, the interweaving already noticed of high spiritual principle with ritualistic details. The ritual seems to a modern reader to rest upon a much lower level of religious thought than the appeals to motives and aims. It took time, experience, and spiritual growth, however, to discover these differences; and at first they were not felt. In our study of the book it is important to regard it from its own point of view. The fact that it contains much which has no place in present-day Christianity only sets in clearer light its high levels of spiritual purpose, and it is these that give it its enduring value.

DIETARY HOLINESS

Probably no single passage could set in sharper contrast the two aspects of religion—the ritualistic and the ethical—than the one extending from 14. 1 to 15. 18. In 14. 1-21 Deuteronomy sets forth that one of the ways in which a holy people is to maintain its holiness is by a holy kind of food. This is the most detailed passage in the book and it still controls the practice of the orthodox Jews as to what they may eat or not eat. Many attempts have been made to explain the classification given here, but no attempt has been wholly successful.

Distinctions in foods are common everywhere and always. The customs in different parts of our own country show considerable differences, and the differences between foods familiar to us and those freely used by other nations are matters of common knowledge. Every traveler, and especially every missionary, can tell strange tales of what other nations are willing or unwilling to eat, and it was natural that the Hebrews should have definite customs of this kind.

It was also natural that these differences should be related to religion. "Clean" and "unclean" as ceremonial terms stand for an idea by no means confined to the Hebrews. Among all nations there are certain animals that are not eaten because they are sacred or because they are profane; but there is no general agreement as to which animals are one or the other. On this point nations differ.

It has been suggested that back of the list given here there lies some sanitary principle or practice that led the Hebrews to avoid certain animal foods that would be injurious to health. This would account for some of these animals being here but not for all. Indeed, it is quite possible that this list in its present form is a gathering up of accumulated customs that cover a long period of time. The whole question of its origin and the wider one as to the basis upon which the cleanness of a food animal was determined are intricate and obscure. No answer has been found which covers all the points.

It should be noted in passing that no discrimination is intended against the sojourner or foreigner in verse 21. The distinction in this case was purely religious. The animal that had died, not having been properly killed, was ceremonially unclean according to the Hebrew's religion. The foreigner's religion might not forbid the animal in question, so he would be free to eat it.

Whatever may have been the original source or purpose of this particular law about animals for food, the point of interest to us is the idea that a man's acceptability in the sight of God depends on what the man ate at his last meal. There can be no doubt that this idea was held in perfect sincerity by the Hebrews, and that they felt that obedience

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to it was a partial preservation of their holiness. Even to-day it would be absurd to doubt the sincerity of the man who eats fish on Friday as a religious observance; but one cannot help feeling this to be an unsatisfactory way of perfecting a man's righteousness.

Christian thought has advanced far beyond this in the positions represented in Mark 7. 14-19; Acts 10. 9-16; and Rom. 14. 14. There may be excellent hygienic reasons for eating or not eating certain foods, and the observance of certain practices in this field may well be the expression of a sincere piety; but the spiritual life must be nourished ultimately by spiritual food and must express itself most truly in acts that involve spiritual relations not only of man with God but equally of man with man. This other kind of action, standing as it does in such contrast to the question of clean or unclean meats, appears in a most interesting form in the latter part of our Scripture selection.

WELFARE WORK (14. 24-29)

The statute that required the worshiper to travel to Jerusalem for his feast "before Jehovah" could hardly be obeyed by everybody. True, the territory of Judah was not extensive, and distances could hardly have been prohibitive as far as time and travel were concerned; but there were those who were too poor to have their own fields, and, naturally, they had no tithes to offer. The widows, the orphans, and the "strangers," who live in every town and village ("within thy gates"), are not to be left unconsidered. Especially the priests who have been deprived of their shrines by Deuteronomy's own command (2 Kings 23. 8, 9)—the Levites—are to be provided for.

This raised what would be called to-day a social or economic question. What shall be done with or for those who for some reason or other are unable to provide for their own support? If some things already said have dealt with primitive and mechanical aspects of Deuteronomy, there is here a provision that amazes us by its human feeling and its social import. Provision for the poor is made an essential part of religion. Jehovah him-

self gives up the gifts that would otherwise be offered directly to him, that the needy shall have their wants supplied. This is perhaps the earliest instance of what to-day would be called "organized charity." It is not necessary to suppose that each person's "third year" came at the same time. Each year would be a "third year" for some, so that supplies would be replenished annually "within thy gates."

Significantly enough, it is not until this precept of brotherhood is reached that the divine blessing is added (verse 29), and here Deuteronomy rises to Christian levels. Service of man is service of God, and neglect of one is neglect of the other. Probably it was because Deuteronomy is so rich in these spiritual discernments that Jesus seems to have known this book so well. In it he heard the echo of his own spirit. A people whose community life was ordered on such principles as these would be a holy people whose holiness would find daily demonstration in terms none could misunderstand; and while no race has fulfilled this ideal, it is worth noting that the Jews, even down to the present day, are conspicuous for their care of the poor, the sick, and the needy of their own people.

CANCELED LOANS (15. 1-18)

The high idealism characteristic of Deuteronomy appears in the (to us) curious provision for the cancellation of debts and the release of slaves every seventh year. It may have been a device growing out of a desire to prevent undue oppression of the weak and the poor. Like many other beautiful ideals, however, it seems to have been rather impracticable. It grants that if the other provisions of the code were carried out, there would be no occasion for this one, for then there would be no needy poor (verse 4). But the presence of the poor is a fact too persistent for even Deuteronomy to deny (verses 7, 11), so an attempt is made to alleviate the situation.

It is not clear just how the plan was expected to work out in the matter of loans. Two kinds of loans were possible: (1) what we would call charitable aid, deeds of

good will intended to help somebody out of an emergency; (2) commercial loans, investments, in which men lent money in order to make more money. It may be that the biblical injunction against taking interest was intended to apply to the charitable loans only, and that interest on investment loans was not forbidden.

That the plan was not always carried out with fidelity is shown in Neh. 5, where, in a passage that belongs to a much later time, we are told of a case (that could hardly have been the only one) of failure to observe it. Even in those distant days the rights of property were apt to take precedence over the rights of persons, and Deuteronomy's attempt to stem this persistent tide of self-interest deserves profound admiration even if it did not win unqualified success. These inspired authors were sure that some way must be found and followed by which to preserve the welfare of the community as a whole. Israel must be a holy people.

HOLINESS

What, then, are we to understand Deuteronomy to mean by the term "holy people"?

The study of the Bible brings one sooner or later to the discovery that words long familiar, words the student supposes he understood perfectly, have not always meant what he supposes them to mean. A word's real meaning at any particular time or in any particular connection is the idea the speaker or writer intended to convey when he used that word; and at different times the same word may be used as a sign or label for very different ideas. This is true in the history of our own language; and it is even more strikingly true when to the differences found in one's language are added the differences due to translation from a foreign tongue. In that foreign tongue the word in question had a background of custom and of culture which, while always present in the mind of the foreigner, cannot be transferred to an English reader by the simple process of translation.

**"Who the poet would understand
Must travel to the poet's land."**

This is particularly true of the inspired poets and others who produced the Scriptures; and without this kind of understanding the Bible remains only a book of words that have been carried from their home as captives and forced into the service of alien conquerors.

The words "holy" and "holiness" belong in this goodly company of terms that, while preserving their forms as words, serve from age to age as signs or labels for a wide variety of ideas. When we think or speak of a "holy people," it is not enough to say with easy assurance, "Oh, I know what holiness means"; for the meaning now is not what it once was. How, then, can its meaning be discovered? By the simple process of observing how it is used, noting the persons, acts, or objects to which it is applied, and considering the qualities that constitute "holiness" from the writer's point of view.

In the case of Deuteronomy such a study soon shows that "holiness" in a majority of cases is obtained by some physical act or outward observance that has only the remotest connection with an inward spirit or motive. It is a formal matter. So that one becomes "holy" by avoiding certain kinds of food, celebrating certain times and seasons at certain places and in certain ways, performing certain ritual acts such as circumcision, and, in short, doing or leaving undone a great many things that have no immediate relation to one's personal character. Of course, as has already been pointed out, certain requirements are laid down in the book of Deuteronomy which undoubtedly reveal what we would call spiritual motives and aims; but Deuteronomy has not yet reached the point where outward acts find their whole value in the spirit that prompts them. The Christian point of view, theoretically at least, finds in a man's motive and aim the seat of the Christian religion. His behavior is regarded as flowing from these as a stream flows from a spring. But Deuteronomy sees no distinction. According to Deuteronomy it is just as "holy" to avoid eating pork as to avoid telling a lie. And it needs only a superficial reading of the book to show that the outward acts receive considerably more space and emphasis than the inward aims.

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Some elements we regard as essential to holiness are noticeably lacking in Deuteronomy. We miss many of those Christian qualities which the example and teaching of Jesus have made inseparable from our thoughts of holiness, besides finding many outward forms and ceremonies only slightly removed from ancient superstition. One needs only to consider what sort of life a man would live who obeyed every requirement laid down in this book to realize that while, from the book's point of view, he would then be "holy," he would be a very curious person from our point of view.

To appreciate Deuteronomy, however, it is necessary to compare its position with the general view of religion held by the people before and at the time of its appearance rather than with those fuller views that followed, and which Deuteronomy itself helped to establish. Of the results to which such a consideration would lead two may be mentioned:

1. As compared with the popular religion of the time Deuteronomy contains a very high proportion of moral and spiritual principles. The formal ceremonies, as far as the principle was concerned, would be taken for granted; but these lofty ideals and spiritual insights, found here and throughout the book, must have seemed very strange and very new. It is these newer, spiritual advances that constitute the book's permanent worth and that give it its significance as a monument on the path of man's age-long march toward God.

2. Much religion to-day shows a mixture of outward form and inward spirit as curious and as illogical as that which we find in Deuteronomy. In principle Deuteronomy is not yet outgrown. We too have our rituals and our ceremonies, which, after all is said and done, neither prove nor compel that inward purity of spirit which is the ideal of Christianity. If we can move toward a spiritualization of our modern religion in the degree to which Deuteronomy moved toward the spiritualization of the religion of the Hebrews, we shall be in the truest sense following all that is best and noblest in the path that Deuteronomy has marked out.

FOR DISCUSSION

How was religion applied to the question of meats?

What is the Christian viewpoint regarding ceremonially
unclean foods?

Who probably would have no tithes to give? Why?

What provision was made for them?

What was the plan regarding loans?

What difficulty arises in understanding the English
Bible?

How is the Bible meaning of a word to be discovered?

What different senses had the word "holy"?

How did Deuteronomy compare spiritually with the
popular religion of its day?

What incongruities appear in present-day religion?

CHAPTER VI

THE HOLY FEASTS

Deuteronomy 16. 1-17

CHRISTIANITY as a historic movement did not long preserve the simple informality of its early years, but built up many institutions that were felt to embody and to express its characteristic life. One of these was the order of times and seasons now known as the church year. From Advent to Whitsuntide the ritualistic churches of Christendom observe a kind of pageant of the life of Christ from his birth, through the temptation, to the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and, finally, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Many of the Protestant churches, in turning away from the Church of Rome and the Church of England, turned away also from these annual reminders of the outstanding events in the life of Christ and remembered only Christmas and Easter, and even these were ignored at times. The result has been that many Protestants know Christmas and Easter only in a vague way as Christian holidays but have no feeling for their association with the historic movement of the Christian year.

The Hebrews also had a sacred calendar, marked, in their case, by sacred assemblies and holy feasts. Among these are three that stand out most conspicuously. They are the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. The first of these comes in the spring of the year, in the month of "the young ears of corn" (for that is what "Abib" means in verse 1). Seven weeks after this beginning of harvest came the Feast of (the seven) Weeks. Finally, when the grain had been threshed, and the grapes pressed, came the week through which the Feast of Booths was celebrated.

THE PASSOVER (16. 1-8)

In view of the importance attached to the Passover by later generations we might expect a fuller account of it

in this place. It is here combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread in such a way that the two have become practically one; and thus they remain to this day. But they were not originally one, and they are described separately elsewhere in the Old Testament (Exod. 12. 21-27; 13. 3-10; 23. 15; 34. 18). It seems highly probable that the Passover proper—that is, the sacrifice of an animal from “the flock or the herd” (verse 2; note that a *lamb* is not specified)—was observed at least as early as the Exodus; and some have thought that, in the form of a sacrifice of firstlings (compare 15. 19-23), it goes back to a still earlier day. At the Exodus it naturally received a new significance, and this new meaning gave it its chief importance for all subsequent time.

When the Hebrews entered Canaan they found this other spring festival observed, more suitable to an agricultural people than to keepers of flocks and herds, and it was only natural that they should adopt this other festival as one of the religious requirements of the land into which they had come. It was equally natural that the two festivals, celebrated at the same season, should eventually be combined in the way that appears here in Deuteronomy. This would not be unlike the way our Christmas and the Roman Saturnalia influenced each other.

In one important and characteristic respect, however, Deuteronomy lays down an entirely new provision bearing on the Passover. It is to be sacrificed at one place only, and not at home any more. In this Deuteronomy is very explicit. We have already met this provision, and its application to the Passover is simply a special case of the Deuteronomic theory that sacrifice to Jehovah should be offered nowhere but in Jerusalem. It is probably the official observance in Jerusalem in this national way that underlies the comment in 2 Kings 23. 22; and some think that this was the first time the Passover was observed in the way called for by Deuteronomy.

From the point of view of religious values these modifications in the Passover are not matters of indifference. They show in a striking way the developing character of a living faith. Whatever the sacrifice might have been be-

fore the Exodus, from that time on there is no doubt that it became the celebration of the deliverance from Egypt. As such it would be kept by each family at home (Exod. 12. 21, 22). The unleavened bread had no special significance in the Egyptian Passover; it was simply one of the exigencies of the situation (Exod. 12. 34). But these original conditions yield to later influences, and the observance becomes richer from generation to generation as it gathers up succeeding experiences and incorporates them into its own symbolism.

The Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper has had a somewhat similar history. From the simple and informal occasion when Jesus himself spoke the memorable words that have given the Supper eternal significance to the celebration of the Communion at the present day, there stretches a path along which the rite has become in many respects quite a different matter from what it was at the beginning. Even the symbolism of the common cup has been dispensed with in many places in obedience to modern views of health and its protection. These changes, of course, do not impair the religious value of the rite, for that, after all, depends on the spirit of the worshiper; but they remind us that religious ceremonies, if they have any vitality at all, must yield to the influence of the continuing life to which they minister, and which they should express.

THE FEAST OF WEEKS

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is now so closely associated with the Passover that its original character as part of an agricultural calendar is somewhat obscured. This is not the case with the Feast of (the seven) Weeks, which is plainly a kind of farmers' festival. The influence of the land of Canaan upon the Hebrew religion is nowhere more conspicuous than in the way this agricultural feast takes its place in the sacred calendar. The traditions of the deliverance from Egypt, the guidance through the wilderness, and the final settlement in Canaan all dealt with the mighty acts of Jehovah as these appeared in historical events—events having no necessary connection with

that large field of life and experience which we call the world of nature. But in such a feast as this, religion appears against a background of nature. God is recognized not only as showing his power in national and political affairs, but equally as the Giver of the gifts of the field on which the life of man depends. This aspect of God's care found ready response in Hebrew minds, and its influence appears in many places in the Old Testament (for example, Hos. 2. 8; Psa. 65. 9-13). The invocation of God's blessing and the offering of thanks at mealtime are distant reflections of the same spirit. It may be because it carries its own significance with it that this feast was not connected with any memorable event in Israel's history. It stood on its own merits. At least this is true so far as the Old Testament is concerned. Later Judaism held that it commemorated the giving of the law on Sinai, but this connection is not stated in the Old Testament books.

A more definite specification as to just when this feast should be held is given in Lev. 23. 15-17. From the Greek word for "fiftieth," based on the fifty days there indicated, comes the word "Pentecost," by which name the feast is known in the New Testament.

THE FEAST OF BOOTHS

This feast crowned the agricultural year as a kind of harvest home, and because it stood out so above the others it was often referred to simply as "the feast." The booths were rough temporary shelters such as those used by guardians of vineyards (Isa. 1. 8), who would protect the vineyards, as the grapes ripened, by camping on the spot. The booths were made of any branches that were suitable and available for the purpose (Neh. 8. 15). It seems probable that the name of the feast comes out of this background, and that the custom was an ancient one. In Lev. 23. 42, 43 the dwelling in booths is connected with the story of the Exodus and is regarded as a reminder of the way the Hebrews had to live at that historic time.

Deuteronomy gives no detailed instructions as to just how these feasts were to be observed; it is assumed that

the details are familiar. The new element is their transference to Jerusalem. When the agricultural character of the feasts is recognized, it is also clear that transferring them to Jerusalem would tend to diminish their local significance and facilitate an increasing emphasis on the historic events with which they had become associated. In this way Deuteronomy's influence was toward separating the Hebrew religion from its close association with a kind of nature worship and concentrating it more and more on a national experience in which, through common suffering and divine succor, the nation was led to a deeper dependence on Jehovah.

THE SPIRIT OF THE FEASTS

In our thought we are accustomed to attach to many of these religious occasions a solemnity they did not have and were not intended to have. They were far removed from anything of a penitential character. There were no searchings of heart but, rather, happiness and a good time (verses 11, 14, 15). It is a genuine feast that is stipulated, with all that a feast involves. Deity's part is satisfied with a prayer of thanksgiving and the fact that the feast is eaten at his shrine, "before Jehovah." To do this faithfully is part of "serving Jehovah."

In earlier days it had not been possible to go to Jerusalem; for until David had captured the city from the Jebusites, it was not even in the possession of the Hebrews (2 Sam. 5. 6-10). Elkanah, for instance, goes to the Temple at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1). The occasion on which he appears at this Temple suggests the extremes to which these feasts were sometimes carried. The old priest Eli apparently found nothing surprising in the possibility of Hannah's being drunk. This would not detract from the validity of the feast. Long, long afterward Paul had to condemn similar things in connection with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11. 17-22), but in the ancient period no such offense was felt.

A LARGER VIEW OF GOD (16. 1-17)

The influence upon the Hebrews of the life in Canaan is

nowhere more obvious than in these religious festivals of Unleavened Bread, Harvest, and Ingathering. They are distinctly agricultural in character. But the Hebrews, previous to their entrance into Canaan, had not been farmers. Throughout the book of Genesis, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are consistently represented as keepers of sheep and cattle, and not as tillers of the soil nor as vine growers (Gen. 47. 1-4). This is also true of Moses and of the Hebrews during the period of the wanderings in the wilderness. It is quite obvious that the wilderness was no place for agriculture; so that when the Hebrews entered Canaan, where agriculture supplied the chief subsistence, they found new conditions of life and a new kind of occupation.

Many of these new features involved new religious observances. Among these were the festivals here described which were so purely agricultural in their significance, and their place in Deuteronomy shows how completely the new conditions in Canaan had become identified with the Hebrew religion. By this time Jehovah was no longer (in their thought) simply the God of war who helped them to fight their way into Canaan (Judg. 5); he had become the God of the country and of its fertility (Hos. 2. 8).

It is not difficult to realize that a view of God which regards him as the Controller of crops and seasons, in addition to being a Leader in battle, is a distinct advance over the view that connects him with conquest only; but it is not so easy to realize that the Hebrews actually passed through an experience that led them from the narrower to the broader way. It was not done in a moment nor in one generation. For many years only the leaders of the people had grasped the idea in its full significance; but it was reached at last and it came to stay. When first proposed it was a "new view." It meant, in essence, that these advanced thinkers were claiming for Jehovah an influence in fields that up to that time had been regarded as lying outside his proper scope and power. In principle it is not unlike the process through which we are now passing. The new world that has been opened to us by the

discoveries of modern science is a kind of Canaan in which we find forces at work that leave no place, apparently, for the

"God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line."

The religious sanctions that all Oriental people require for all phases of life are quite lost by most modern people of the West in the feeling that somehow or other the world is sufficient unto itself; and though they may occasionally pray for rain in time of drought they rather feel that scientific farming is a better solution of the problems of agriculture than religious ceremonies. True, there are still superstitious survivals among otherwise intelligent people, as, for instance, the dread of Friday or of the number thirteen; but, regarded as a whole, the routine of daily life is not felt to have any immediate contact with religion, and these moderns look with amazement and some amusement on those who refuse to strike a bargain or start a journey or build a house without invoking the divine blessing.

This does not mean that science will and must banish religion. There is no necessary conflict between the two. But it does mean that the science of a late period inevitably reveals inconsistencies and weaknesses in the religion of an earlier period. The discord between science (modern) and religion (ancient) which still raises apprehension in the minds of many arises from their failure to work out and to build up a religion of the same date as their science. The ancient form of religion is not to be preferred above the science of to-day any more than the ancient views of science are to be preferred above the enlightened faith of a twentieth-century Christian. Things the Lord hath put asunder should not be joined together.

Neither does this mean that any abiding worth in the ancient forms of religion can be dispensed with or will be. Whatever men thought of the shape or size of the earth or of the nature and function of the air, earth and

air are here now as they were there then; and the fact that we understand them better and use them more intelligently than our fathers did is simply due to our larger grasp of the truth. It implies no disparagement of the fathers and no denial of the earth and air. Similarly, whatever men's views of the meanings and methods of religion, the search for and trust in a higher Power, a sense of obligation to others than oneself and to more than one's private interests—these are here now as they were there then. They are, so to speak, the "earth and air" of religion; and the fact that we seek our God in a vastly larger world and find him in different fields of human activity is due to the growing light of revelation, implying no disparagement of the fathers and no denial of the facts of religion. When the later and larger revelations are more widely appreciated, the world modern science has made known will be recognized as God's world in a far richer sense than that in which the ancient Hebrews looked upon Jehovah as the Giver of the produce of farm and field.

The larger view of God which came to the Hebrews in Canaan and which is illustrated in the adoption of these agricultural festivals is a truer view because more inclusive than that which they brought up with them out of the wilderness. We see it now. And one need claim no special foresight to assert that the view of God which men will have when they really assimilate the facts of our modern scientific world (our Canaan) will be not only larger but truer than the view that many of us have brought along out of the ancient world of traditional religion.

FOR DISCUSSION

What is meant by the church year?

What were the chief occasions in the sacred year of the Hebrews?

How ancient was the Passover?

With what festival was it combined and what led to the combination?

What new requirement did Deuteronomy make for it?

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In what way is the history of the Lord's Supper similar to that of the Passover?

What was the Feast of Weeks, and what was it called later?

Why was the Feast of Booths so called, and what were the booths for?

What is the new element in Deuteronomy's references to these feasts?

Describe the general character of one of the feasts.

What difference do these feasts reflect between the life of the desert and the life of Canaan?

What bearing have these changes on the progress of religion?

CHAPTER VII

AND ON EARTH—JUSTICE!

Deuteronomy 1. 9-18; 16. 18-20; 17. 8-13; 19. 15-21

IF everyone were as good and as wise as he would like everyone else to be, it is possible that difficulties of government would never arise. People would not only be eager to conduct their affairs on a friendly basis but would know how to do it. Motive without method is blind. Method without motive is powerless. Over and over again groups of earnest people have attempted to organize an ideal community in which life should be happy and worth while because all would share the responsibilities as well as the rewards of the undertaking. The failure of these attempts is due not always, by any means, to knavery or malice, but quite as often to simple ignorance of how to arrange matters. Even with the best will in the world the organization of a community is a complicated problem whose satisfactory solution calls for gifts of a high order. In no community, however, can "the best will in the world" be taken for granted; and the difficulties of method are often quite lost sight of in the presence of the ambitions, the enmities, and the selfishness that blast the hopes of individuals and of empires. Whether it be the Rome of yesterday or the Russia of to-day, the conditions are equally baffling.

While the problems of government may be more clearly seen to-day than they were three thousand years ago, it cannot be claimed that we are much nearer their solution than were the people of antiquity. It would have been strange if the writers of Deuteronomy had said nothing about the administration of justice, and the passages here brought together, simple as they are in some respects, show a profound insight into some of the essential elements of civil procedure.

It is not meant that Deuteronomy contemplated any

such complicated system of courts as exists to-day. There was no "system of jurisprudence," nor were there innumerable volumes of cases that an aspiring student could read as a preparation for technical legal practice. There were, however, the rich stream of custom and tradition which had crystallized into the code known as the "Book of the Covenant" (Exod. 20. 22 to 23. 33); the cases constantly calling for settlement; and the need for a recognized and responsible man, or group of men, to whom such settlements could be intrusted.

Deuteronomy proposes a legal machinery quite adequate to the society for which it was intended; but it does not stop there. It sets forth with equal definiteness the ethical principles that should be applied in the settlement of the cases considered. It thus offers both a method and a motive for the administration of justice, and does this in a way that is at once practical and prophetic.

"GOD GIVE US MEN"

Early in the first of the introductory discourses (1. 6 to 4. 40), preceding the Deuteronomic Code proper, it is stated that too many cases were brought to Moses for him to be able to hear them all personally. This led to the interesting provision described in verses 13-15. With a view to delegating some of the work to others Moses calls on the people themselves to select such men as would be qualified for the task. Each tribe was to select men having these qualifications, and then from these Moses selected judges, or captains, whom he appointed over larger or smaller groups into which the tribe was divided. Thus no member of a tribe was left without someone to whom he was definitely authorized to appeal in case of difficulty. The arrangement calls to mind Wesley's organization of classes, by which there should be a definite and responsible oversight provided for each one uniting with the Methodist societies. The qualifications are not unlike those specified in Acts 6. 3 for another situation where religious leaders had to be released from hearing the disputes whose adjustment could be handed over to others.

Deuteronomy assumes that each tribe possessed such men,

men wise and understanding, and that these men would be ready to do the work assigned them. Probably nothing was more remote from the thought of the Deuteronomists than what we call democracy, but in making provision for the administration of justice in a community it was inevitable that something of this kind should appear sooner or later.

A stream can rise no higher than its source, and the government of a community can rise no higher than the source of that government. When the people themselves are made responsible for their officials, those officials cannot be better than the best that the community produces. They may be worse, but they cannot be better. And it is significant in this case that while Moses represents the appointing power, the responsibility of producing worthy candidates is thrown back upon the people themselves. The whole question reduces itself to this in any society and is fundamental in a democracy.

A further question—and a very perplexing one in our own huge commonwealth—is whether, having produced men of power and insight, well equipped for public service, we can persuade them to use their abilities in this direction. Three strong influences tend to keep them out of the field: (1) the suspicion with which so many of us habitually regard all who are in any way tied to political office; (2) the so-called red tape that ties the hands of anyone who presumes to act with initiative and authority; and (3) the smallness of the salaries for such men as compared with the income they can command in private life. Until public service can be redeemed from its reproach of graft and dishonor, until public servants, especially in the higher offices, can have a freedom and an authority commensurate with the needs of their duties, and until there ceases to be too great a disparity between official salaries and the incomes of private practice, government will remain in the hands of those who regard it as a gainful trade.

Even this wider scope and greater freedom will not of themselves enable the community to produce the requisite leadership. The men who occupy the offices must be

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inspired not by dreams of freer action but by ideals of service. Part of their qualification will be and must be the high vision that sees the welfare of the community as an object fully worthy their best efforts. The community itself must have such a zeal for the welfare of the whole that the men who grow up in its atmosphere cannot help but be guided by these aims and inspired by this spirit.

It would be interesting to know whether any of the heads of tribes or captains of hundreds "declined with regret," telling Moses how deeply they appreciated the confidence he was showing in them, but that they were so situated just then that it would be quite impossible for them to accept the honor. Perhaps some who accepted the appointment, intending to act in the most honorable way, found themselves weakening under the pressure of various temptations until they realized that they were selling out their favors to the highest bidder.

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION

The East is notorious for the way "justice" is at the mercy of bribes and influence, and there was nothing imaginary about the dangers against which the Hebrews were warned (1. 16, 17; 16. 19); but these dangers were not peculiar to the Hebrews nor to antiquity. They exist wherever men are willing to seek their own advantage at the expense of others, and where their desire for power and for property conquers the spirit of friendliness and of human brotherhood. It sounds rather modern to speak this way, for many feel that the social bearing of Christianity is only a recent development of Christian thought. In some degree this is true. While the spirit of brotherhood has always been inherent and essential in Christianity, and while there has never been lacking some attempt to apply it in a social way, the broad implications of the principle as a basis for all human relations, political and industrial as well as individual, have been brought into particularly clear light in comparatively recent years.

In view of the slowness of the Christian movement to apply this principle to civil relations it is all the more surprising that, long before Christianity appeared, Deuter-

onomy had definitely laid down the basis upon which alone it would be possible to settle the disputes and to straighten out the tangles that arise from the intentional and unintentional difficulties between man and man. On these particular points later thought has had nothing to add to the principles laid down in this unique book. While the position it takes on these questions may well have grown out of the teaching of the great prophets, it is here that these principles are first incorporated in a document that is, to all intents and purposes, the constitution and by-laws of a nation.

PATIENCE AND FAIRNESS

The first charge to the judges was "Hear—." How simple and superfluous it sounds! Is it not the primary purpose of judges that they should hear the cases that call for settlement? Yet second thought reminds us at once that it is not all so easy as it sounds. Let anyone reading these notes consider whether or not it is easy to have a case brought up in court; or whether it is as easy for one as another; or whether judges can always be counted on to hear a case patiently, thoroughly, and fairly. It is a matter of common knowledge that the man who is poor in money or in influence is at a disadvantage.

There are some excuses for this unfortunate situation. It is not to be blamed wholly or even chiefly upon wicked individuals. Cases accumulate to such an extent that it becomes a physical impossibility to hear them within a reasonable time. Wealthy plaintiffs or defendants are able to hire highly trained legal experts to handle their cases, whereas the poor man, by virtue of his poverty, cannot afford to engage equally able counsel. The following paragraph appeared in a morning paper the day these notes were written. It is an excellent illustration of the difficulties that confront those who want to "hear" and those who want, and who ought, to be heard:

Twelve years after her husband was killed by a falling bale of cotton Mrs. Margaret Curran got a verdict Saturday in New York for fifteen thousand dollars, with interest and costs

of ten thousand dollars more. Her children have grown up while the case dragged along, and it will drag yet more years as a new appeal is announced. Such a shocking condition justifies what has been said of American court procedure by Chief Justice Taft and other leading lawyers.

Wherever the fault may lie, the fact remains that the charge uttered by Deuteronomy so many centuries ago has not yet been observed in any adequate fashion. If we as a people were really concerned about such matters, who can doubt for a moment that, with the organizing and administrative ability our people have shown in the fields of industry and trade, it would be possible to open a path through this forest of overgrown technicalities into the light of a justice that would be promptly accessible to all? The Hippocratic oath of the physician should be echoed in a Deuteronomic oath for the lawyer, saying, "I will faithfully hear the causes between my brethren."

Necessary as the hearing is, it is only half the story. The other half is "judge righteously." It is not enough to give every man a chance for a trial; he must have a *fair* trial. Says Deuteronomy, "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small and the great alike; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man" (1. 17); "neither shalt thou take a bribe; for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the cause of the righteous. . . . Thou shalt not wrest justice" (16. 19).

When one reflects how insidiously personal interests inject themselves into all kinds of situations, it is obvious that one acting as judge must be constantly on his guard against the dangers of unfairness and partiality. He may well wish that he himself could imitate the familiar symbolic figure of Justice and blindfold himself in some fashion so that it would be impossible for him to know the identity of the persons involved in the case he has to settle. The scales of justice which he figuratively holds would then be evenly balanced, and he would not deflect them so as to favor one side or the other. In the absence of any such physical defense the judge can only strengthen himself from within, fortifying his mind and spirit

against the appeals which may be resisted but never escaped. This is the view taken by Deuteronomy; and here, as elsewhere, the appeal of the book is to reason and rectitude.

THE CASE OF FOREIGNERS

A particularly interesting detail included in the charge to the judges (1. 16) is the reference to the foreigner. The man here referred to is the one who has left his own country and people and has settled among the Hebrews (see also 24. 14, 17, 19-22). No nation that amounts to anything fails to attract foreigners, and one of its problems is how to deal with them. Among these ancient Hebrews the decision was that a settler should be treated as fairly and as justly as a native.

This sets a high standard of social conduct. A foreigner is usually regarded with suspicion, contempt, or ridicule. He is different from us, he doesn't belong here, he must be inferior to us! We may pity him and try to lift him up to our own level of intelligence and integrity, but we cannot ignore or forget how different he is or that, however much we may be able to give him, he surely has nothing to give us. This is true among all people, but it is none the less primitive, narrow, and ignorant.

The hysterical hatred that manifests itself in the presence of foreigners or of foreign ideas or at nothing more than the sound of a foreign name is only an acute example of the sort of thing that makes justice to the foreigner so difficult. When one of our oldest universities came so near to excluding Jews and Negroes without regard to their personal character or scholarly ability, it is no wonder that the man on the street easily falls a victim to the unreasoning race prejudice that still lies so close to the surface of our civilization. It is not considered that a foreigner has any right to the equitable treatment the native takes for granted, and there is no doubt that the foreigner often fails to get it. Yet here is Deuteronomy with its simple, direct "and the stranger" (1. 16, literally, "settler"), placing equity above prejudice in a way we have yet to learn.

DOES IT WORK?

The fact that these demands were laid upon judges is clear evidence that they were needed. The existence of these lofty sentiments in Deuteronomy does not warrant us in supposing that they met immediate acceptance and that they were given a hundred-per-cent application by everybody. Unfortunately noble precepts do not work that way. We do not know just how fully they were lived up to among the Hebrews, but we are very sure that they are not lived up to nowadays in any general way. The goal here set is still ahead of us.

It is a fair question whether this goal will ever be reached except along the path pointed out in the words "the judgment is God's" (1. 17). Those who deal with the relations between man and man are dealing with holy things. It is well known that a final appeal to deity was a recognized procedure among many peoples, whether by oath, ordeal, the sacred lot, or some other method. Many of these methods seem like pure superstition now, but they were not so regarded at first. To those who invoked them they were real religion; and the devotees must be given credit for honesty and sincerity even if they acted in what seems to us utter ignorance.

Deuteronomy moves in a different atmosphere. Even the judges that were set over the smallest groups, like the steward in the New Testament parable who had only two talents, were dealing with the Lord's affairs. They were his representatives and were doing his work. At every stage it was a sacred business. In other words this work was a religious and a holy work, and its faithful performance was true religion in action. When we begin to feel that we are responsible to God himself for the conduct of our courts we shall find a way to accelerate their action and to purify their procedure.

EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY

Deuteronomy does not stop with the judges but pauses a moment to point out the importance of getting evidence that is reliable. For this reason the matter of witnesses

is of considerable importance (19. 15-21). A man is not to be condemned on the charge of a single accuser. That would be simply a case of fifty-fifty with an even balance between *pro* and *con*. At least two witnesses shall be necessary and, better, three. But if one of these witnesses lied? Suppose he was malicious, "unrighteous," or that he had been bribed: what then? If there is any suspicion of such a case, it must be looked into with the utmost care, and all possible means used to prevent a miscarriage of justice. If upon investigation the witness is found to have given false testimony, "then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother."

Here is given the famous *lex talionis* (law of retaliation): "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." It almost seems a shade less vindictive in this connection as a penalty invoked against a false witness who was trying to get someone else into trouble, than when applied to compensation for the injury itself. It is bad enough either way and serves to emphasize one aspect of these penalties which we are at least beginning to challenge and to correct—namely, whether the state ought not to try to reform a criminal rather than simply to make him suffer. The idea that society somehow "gets even" with a lawbreaker by "taking it out of his hide" has started on the road to oblivion. As a matter of fact, Jesus discarded it two thousand years ago, and we are beginning to learn that he was right.

Nevertheless, that old law was not altogether as brutal as it sounds at first. It not only stipulated that the punishment should "fit the crime" but made it clear that the penalty was not to *exceed* the offense. Christian history shows a record of many outrageous punishments for comparatively insignificant offenses. Indeed, the practical peonage that exists in some parts of our own country is evidence that we have not caught up to Deuteronomy in this respect.

"THY KINGDOM COME"

There remains one element of the body politic which had great importance for the Hebrews, and that was the

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king (17. 14-20). The reference here is negative in its character, telling what the king is *not* to do. It suggests vividly those aspects of Solomon and his reign which were so strongly condemned by later Hebrew teachers. Horses, Egypt, women, and wealth were danger signals. Horses were not much used in the part of Palestine occupied by the Hebrews; and if they were brought in, it would be either for purposes of war or as the acquisitions of luxury. In the case of Solomon they were looked upon as simply another sign of his reckless extravagance. Egypt was always distrusted, and Egyptian alliances always condemned by the prophetic influences that underlie Deuteronomy. Solomon's extensive harem and fabulous riches (see 1 Kings 10) had long been more or less of a scandal among those who had the people's true welfare at heart.¹

Nevertheless, it was as a kingdom that the Hebrew nation developed, and in that day no other form of government was thought of. They not only regarded it as a form authorized by Jehovah but looked upon the king as Jehovah's special agent and as one who was under Jehovah's special care—a feeling echoed in the familiar expression "Jehovah's anointed." In their dim groping way they were moving toward the idea expressed in "Thy kingdom come."

There has been some criticism of kings and kingdoms in recent years, and some have gone so far as to suggest that we ought to speak of the democracy or commonwealth of God instead of his kingdom. For those who want to do it this may be all right, but it hardly seems necessary. The point depends not on the form of government but on the idea that whatever the form may be it should embody and express the spirit and purposes of God. Presidents can be as autocratic in spirit as kings, and kingdoms can be as democratic as republics. The

¹ In verse 18 of the chapter occurs the expression from which the name, "Deuteronomy," is derived. The Hebrew reads "A copy" (that is, a duplicate) "of this law." An early Greek translation rendered this incorrectly as "a second law" (*Deuteronomion*) and applied the title "Deuteronomion" to the whole book. This title was taken over by the later Latin translation, and from that has come down to us in the form "Deuteronomy."

ideal is a community in which God shall be honored in the way each man honors his neighbor, and one of the chief ways in which this is done is in establishing the justice and equity, without fear or favor, that Deuteronomy urged so long ago.

Glory to God in the highest;
And on earth—justice!

FOR DISCUSSION

What do you regard as the two chief obstacles to good government?

What democratic aspect appears in selecting judges from the people?

Why do good men tend to stay out of government service?

Why is it so hard to get a hearing in court?

Will a hearing always be fair? Why?

Is our attitude toward the foreigner in advance of that enjoined in Deuteronomy?

What is the ultimate basis for justice?

What is the central idea in the kingdom of God?

CHAPTER VIII

"THE GOODLY FELLOWSHIP OF THE PROPHETS"

Deuteronomy 13. 1-5; 18. 9-22

As ONE reads the book of Deuteronomy straight through, his resultant impression is dominated by the long code in chapters 12-26 which forms the bulk of the book; and this code deals with so much that is ancient and outlived that the whole book strikes one as having nothing to do with the life of the modern world. Its aims and interests seem to have vanished with the ancient kingdom whose life it reflects. Further attention, however, gradually corrects this impression, and the dim darkness of antiquity, which seems to have settled down not only on Deuteronomy but on the whole Bible as well, is gradually dispelled.

Deuteronomy contains some enduring elements that time cannot efface. It is sometimes said that time is destructive, but time does not act; it simply gives ample opportunity for the strength or weakness of things or men to reveal itself. When the rock disintegrates, it is not because time has laid a rude touch upon it, but because the rock was not in itself of an enduring quality. Time alone neither builds up nor tears down. In the course of time some elements in the book of Deuteronomy have revealed themselves in clearer and clearer light as of deeper significance than others, and among these is its picture of the prophets.

THE PROPHET'S SPECIAL WORK

Israel shared with other nations many of her institutions. The neighboring peoples had kings, priests, judges, and all the apparatus that goes with an organized culture. They even had men who in some degree approached

the character and function of the Hebrew prophets. But in Israel the figure of the prophet dominates her most important history. In Israel prophecy had a development and achieved an eminence that quite surpassed its appearance elsewhere; so that prophecy as represented in its most characteristic examples is now recognized as the unique expression of the Hebrew religion.

It has been supposed by many modern persons that a prophet existed solely for the purpose of telling beforehand about something that was to happen in a more or less distant future.¹ Out of this view grew the idea held by so many to-day that prophecy and prediction mean the same thing. It is true that at times the prophets did look into the future and, by way of warning or encouraging their contemporaries, told what they thought would come to pass later on. But this did not exhaust their activity and, indeed, formed only a small part of it. Furthermore, the Bible itself does not regard prediction as the main business of the prophet. According to Scripture the prophet was especially the one who gave the people the word of Jehovah. As a matter of fact, even a casual reading of the biblical books of the prophets will show that the words of Jehovah which the prophets spoke were concerned immediately and definitely with the people to whom the prophet himself was then speaking. In the same way that Aaron became a speaker for Moses, the prophet is a speaker for God (Exod. 7. 1). The characteristic of the prophet, from the standpoint of the people among whom the prophets themselves appeared, was that the prophet had “the word” (Jer. 18. 18).

The prophets are thus the special ones through whom came that divine guidance which was Israel's peculiar treasure. God's word was a living word because it came through living men and dealt with living issues. Any elaborate prediction of what was to occur in the future would thus be superfluous, as God would himself raise up prophets who, when that future arrived, would speak the divine word due for the occasion. This view regards

¹ The development of this view of prophecy is admirably described in *Prophecy and Authority*, by Kemper Fullerton.

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the way from God to man as always open: the "line" is never "busy" nor "out of order." And this is Deuteronomy's view. Moses stands at the head of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," but he is only one of them. The idea is that after Moses prophet after prophet shall continue to report to the people whatever word Jehovah may have for them (18. 15-19).

SEEKING STRANGE GODS

It is easy to realize how similar the conditions mentioned in 18. 9-14 are to conditions at the present time if one considers the thriving trade driven by all kinds of mediums, the widespread interest in all kinds of occult teachings and foreign faiths, to say nothing of the various kinds of religions represented in the Saturday editions of the great metropolitan dailies. If every item of Deuteronomy's list is not represented, many of them are. The temptations that beset the Hebrews to consult various kinds of mediums were not so widely different or so much more numerous than those which to-day beset the man who is haunted by the thought of mysterious powers in the world but who is not anchored firmly in his fidelity to God.

In meeting this situation Deuteronomy forbids, first of all, the consultation of any representatives of a non-Hebrew religion. This does not mean that we should regard them all as intentionally deceiving or irreligious. Some of them may have been, but many of them were quite in earnest; and there can be no doubt that the larger number of their patrons were fully as religious as the people who seek similar consolation or enlightenment to-day. There is something irresistibly fascinating to many people in what is foreign and mysterious. The appeal would be doubly strong to the Hebrews because these mysterious rites belonged to the land of Canaan, and the Hebrews would naturally feel that the methods of Canaan should be followed when one lived there; but that is just what Deuteronomy forbade.

The prohibition is itself an evidence that men were doing the forbidden thing. These enactments are not

hypothetical propositions that float in the air, but definite applications of important principles to existing situations. We may be sure that if the people had not been giving way to these appeals they would not have been treated so seriously by Deuteronomy nor by Isaiah nor Jeremiah and other prophets.

THE PROPHETS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE

Deuteronomy meets the situation not only by prohibitions from the negative side but positively by the significant assertion that from among the people themselves the true Hebrew prophet should arise. If they seek the will of the higher powers or desire divine favors, let them ask the one of their own number upon whom the Spirit of God has been poured out. He is their prophet (verses 15-19).

In the light of some interpretations of this passage it is important to notice that the reference is not to some special, individual prophet who shall arise after Moses but to a succession of prophets who shall continue to speak for Jehovah as Moses spoke for him. The idea is that after Moses has gone, another shall come, and then another, and another, who in their day and generation, as times shall require, and as God shall reveal, shall speak to the people all that God shall command (verse 18).

It was vital that the people should recognize that even Moses, great as he was, was after all one of themselves. This had its bearing on the character of the nation as well as on that of its great leader. The nation was one from which this kind of man could arise, and his appearance was the guaranty that others were to be expected. They might not reach the greatness of a Moses, but though they might fall below him in degree they would be of his kind. The idea is the same as that referred to in connection with the judges, whom the people themselves are to produce and to select. The people are thus regarded as having a quality which, as manifested in its representative men, was acceptable to and harmonious with the divine nature. It seems fair to suppose that this quality in the Hebrews was not something that separated them from

other nations but which was also potential in others, something all nations shared in some degree, and which the Hebrews showed as a kind of sample of what humanity is in its essential quality. Just as Abraham was the father of the faithful not in what separated him from but in what linked him to his Hebrew descendants, so the Hebrews themselves were the people of God not in what separated them from, but in what linked them to other folk. As Abraham in his highest qualities showed the real and finest nature of the Hebrew people, so the Hebrews in their highest qualities showed the real and finest nature of humanity.

The necessity that not only should a people produce its own judges and prophets but that it does so by virtue of its own native contact with the divine Spirit moves over from Deuteronomy and the Hebrew nation to all people and to us. It is obvious that we shall never produce such men until we make up our minds that they can arise, and that we should be on the lookout for them. We must believe that God is always ready to speak to his children; and if, as individuals, they are not ready to hear him for themselves, there will be some one of their brethren to whom they can hearken (18. 15).

Probably there is nothing more eagerly desired by the majority of mankind than just the message that such men can give. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" is the deepest cry of the human heart. When we feel unable to find him for ourselves we turn to someone else, hoping that through another we may receive the word that, when we seek it alone, seems so distant, so elusive, and so indefinite. If there were only some man or woman through whom the divine word would surely come, we would listen, be thankful, and obey! So we are apt to think, but would we? Did the Hebrews? We know they did not, and probably for the same reason that hinders us: how can one be sure who the real prophet is?

TRUE PROPHETS AND FALSE

At this distance it is so easy to accept Moses and Samuel, Isaiah and Jeremiah, as great and true prophets, so

easy to agree with the condemnations we read of the false prophets, that one hardly realizes the difficulty men had in those days to decide just which was the right one to follow and the one to believe. The true prophets wore no badges. It might not be difficult to distinguish a prophet of a foreign deity from a prophet of Jehovah, but when the Jehovah prophets disagreed among themselves and even opposed each other, it was as confusing and as baffling as it is for us when we try to decide which one of our modern leaders is speaking the true message. Who in those days could tell the true from the false? Signs and wonders (or, as we should say, miracles) would hardly serve to show; for 13. 2 says plainly that there are signs and wonders that actually come to pass but which do not therefore prove the reliability of the prophet who performs them. Neither would the fulfillment of predictions be entirely satisfactory; for a prediction might relate to something that was not to happen until long after the inquirers were dead, and that would leave them, in their lifetime, as much at sea as if no prediction had been uttered.

It must have been a perennial question, and it is not difficult to read between the lines of these passages the perplexities that were seriously disturbing those who were seeking the true prophets. Such passages as 1 Kings 22 and Jer. 23 are only special and conspicuous instances of conditions existing pretty generally throughout Israel's history. As a subject that concerns the ancient Hebrews it may not seem to be of much interest in these days, but as a reflection of what is in many respects a parallel situation to-day it is of considerable interest.

It must not be overlooked that all the writings on this subject that have come down to us (that is, the Scriptures) represent the position of those whom we know as the “true” prophets. All that we know of the “false” prophets comes from their opponents, even the title “false”! This does not mean that the “false” ones are for that reason necessarily misrepresented, but it is at least fairly certain that they are not overpraised. It can hardly be supposed that a young man would start out on a

career which he knew from the beginning was to be "false." From his own point of view, at least, he must have seemed true, whatever he may have seemed to others. Of course, there are men who definitely plan a career of crime, but the false prophets were not of this kind. Such men do not qualify for a prophetic career of any kind, and there would be no particular difficulty in distinguishing them from true prophets. The falseness which the true prophets saw must have been more often in a position or a point of view than in personal badness, although this latter might sometimes be involved.

Allowing for these facts, and despite the absence of any writings that have come from the false prophets which might give their own side of the case, it is clear that, in comparison with their opponents, they formed a majority party. That majority may not always have been as great as the four hundred to one of 1 Kings 22, but it is quite clear that their majority was always considerable (for example, Jer. 26. 8, 11). Popularly speaking, this would be in their favor then and now. In a country whose form of government is based upon the will of the majority it is not surprising that the simple existence of a majority should have great weight in leading people to decide for or against an idea or a person. The man in the minority is always at a disadvantage. The smallness of his following is taken as convincing evidence that he must be wrong. Consider our own feelings toward small religious denominations and small political parties. Does it not often seem that they are small because they are wrong?

These so-called false prophets were not only numerous: they were always on the side of "the powers that be." They were "safe" politically, socially, and religiously. They prophesied "smooth" things, as Jeremiah says. They told the people what the people liked to hear. They stood by the good old ways in contrast to those other lonely creatures who took no counsel of their own comfort but said the thing that was strange and unwelcome. On the side of the false prophets were the advantages of majority and tradition; on the other side were the disadvantages of minority and novelty. It is easy to see which group would

be the more popular in its own day, and it is disconcerting to consider that had we lived in those days we probably should have stood with the majority, as we do now.

PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL

Despite the difficulties in the way of recognizing a true prophet, Deuteronomy stands squarely on the principle of this living prophetic leadership. This was the ideal, and in the greatest periods of Israel's religious inspiration it was the fact. So deeply did the greater leaders feel the importance of the spirit of prophecy that the hasty ejaculation of Moses, "Would that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his Spirit upon them!" (Num. 11. 29) became, long, long afterward, the literal hope of Israel's final glory (Joel 2. 28, 29). It was a splendid vision but too high for realization—yet. Men do not like to feel that God is immediately at hand and in direct communication with them. It is, of course, desirable that God should be available if we are in distress or think we need him for any reason. It is comforting to think of him as "a very present help in trouble." But we should like to feel free at times to go about our own affairs.

Curiously enough, the book of Deuteronomy, which so splendidly sets forth this high principle of a constant living guidance through an unfailing line of God's spokesmen, became one of the most serious obstacles to the acceptance of that principle. As a book embodying prophetic messages for its own day it could be consulted at will, but the impression gradually grew that God's revelation was all in the book, and that the book contained the will of God for all time. This would make future prophets unnecessary, and people would eventually stop looking for them. It was much easier to read an ancient writing than to listen for a living voice; and when the book was not explicit, ingenious interpretations were not lacking which claimed all the authority of the book itself.

This process had been carried to great length by the Jews in the days of Jesus, and it is not surprising that the Jews who followed Jesus and who became the first Chris-

tians should have brought it over into Christianity. It is not of the essence, however, of either the Hebrew or the Christian religion. These, in their purity, rest back upon the constant and immediate guidance that God provides through a living voice rather than through a dead letter. It is that voice which speaks through the goodly fellowship of the prophets.

FOR DISCUSSION

What relation has prediction to prophecy?

What is the Scripture view of a prophet?

What place does Moses hold among the prophets?

What tendency is there to-day to "seek after strange gods"?

What did the existence of prophets show about the character of the nation?

What popular longing do prophets fulfill?

What made it hard to tell true prophets from false?

Were the "false" prophets popular? Why?

What is the ideal leadership for a people? Why?

How did Deuteronomy delay the acceptance of its own ideal?

CHAPTER IX

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Deuteronomy 5. 6-21 (Exodus 20. 1-17; 34. 17-28)

It might be supposed that all had been said about the Ten Commandments that could be said, and that they might well be omitted here; but no study of Deuteronomy would be complete without reference to these famous and familiar words, and it is unfortunately true that familiarity is sometimes the most effective way to hide a saying's true significance. It is worth while, therefore, to review some of the things already known about these commandments and also to consider some things frequently overlooked.

Many Bible readers suppose that when one speaks of the Ten Commandments he refers to a certain group of ten sayings as if there were only one such group. This is by no means the case. A moment's thought will show that ten was a natural number to remember. In harmony with this situation one finds, as soon as he begins to look for them, a large number of sets of five among the laws recorded in the Old Testament, and he begins to realize that to say "Ten Commandments" is more or less indefinite until he specifies just which ten he refers to.¹

This principle of providing for the easy recollection of important matters carries with it the strong probability that in their earliest form the Ten Commandments were more nearly what the Hebrews literally called them—namely, the Ten Words; that is, they were stated originally in the shorter form, in which the first, sixth, seventh, and eighth still stand. This would make the whole ten read as follows:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

¹ A collection of many of these groups of fives may be found in *Israel's Laws and Legal Precedents*, Kent (Student's Old Testament).

2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt do no murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

The additions to these concise commands are almost wholly in the spirit and character of Deuteronomy and may easily have been added to the original brief word in much the same way that the old catechism, which some still remember, had a brief definite answer to its question and then, alongside the answer, explanatory statements designed to make the brief answer clearer.

WHICH ARE THE ORIGINAL TEN?

The clearest illustration of some of the questions raised by the term "Ten Commandments" is found in Exod. 34. 17-28:

1. "Thou shalt make thee no molten gods."
2. "The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt."
3. "All that openeth the womb is mine; and all thy cattle that is male, the firstlings of cow and sheep."
4. "And the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck. All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty."
5. "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest."
6. "And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, *even* of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end."
7. "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel. For I will

cast out nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before Jehovah thy God three times in the year."

8. "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning."

9. "The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of Jehovah thy God."

10. "Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk."

"And Jehovah said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

Here is a set of laws definitely called "the Ten Commandments," yet the laws themselves differ widely from the Ten Commandments nearly everyone thinks of when he hears the term used. And not only is this set called "Ten Commandments," but it is definitely stated that these were the ones written on the tables of stone. Most curious of all is the fact that as the list now stands there are really more than ten.

It is also important to notice that the ten that most of us were taught occur in Exod. 20. 1-17, where they are not specified as a "ten"; while the reference to the exact number appears in Deut. 4. 13 and 10. 4, in which places the commandments referred to must be the ones in 5. 6-21. These laws, it is true, are almost identical with those in Exod. 20. 1-17, but not quite. There is an unimportant difference in the order of the items in the last commandment and a very significant difference in the fourth commandment in the reason for keeping the Sabbath.¹

It has been said that the recognition of distinctions is the basis of all knowledge. At the risk of seeming to begin at a rather remote point it will be well worth while to

¹ For a discussion of these facts, along with many others bearing on this question, consult any good Bible dictionary or the volume by Kent referred to in the previous note.

glance for a moment at the Decalogue¹ found in Exod. 34. The contrast it shows with the more familiar one will set the latter in much clearer light.

In Exod. 34 the instructions all have to do with rites and ceremonies, with the observance of feasts, sacrifices, and special seasons, so that this group of laws is usually called the ritual Decalogue. It is these laws that, according to the statement that follows them, are to be inscribed on stone tablets for preservation. It may be remarked in passing that the custom of having important laws or records engraved on stone goes back to a very ancient date. The most famous example is probably the Code of Hammurabi, which was unearthed in Babylonia not many years ago. It goes back as far as the days of Abraham and contains many laws quite similar to some of the laws in the Bible. Even if Jehovah had not commanded that his laws should be so preserved, it would have been the most natural thing for the Hebrews to do it that way in any case.

RITUALISTIC RELIGION

The importance of this ritual Decalogue to us, however, is not the way it was preserved, but the information it gives us regarding the way men thought of God. We have been brought up to believe that God cares little for form and ceremony but a great deal for spirit and motive. In this Decalogue, Jehovah is thought of as wholly concerned with a kind of ecclesiastical calendar, which could clearly be observed or neglected without having any relation to the moral character of the individual who acknowledged it.

This is the kind of religion that is the first to develop among people. Men think of their deity as being pleased with a present or angered by neglect. So they build up a system of ceremonial acts which they believe so pleases their god that he will be favorably disposed toward them. It is only in later periods that men arise who discover

¹ The word "decalogue," meaning, literally, "Ten Words," seems to have been used first by the great Christian church Father, Clement of Alexandria, and is used here as a more convenient term than the Ten Commandments.

the deeper truth of God and who dare to teach that he desires "goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (Hos. 6. 6).

This is illustrated in the Bible itself, where the religious ideas that were held in the days of the judges by Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and the rest were decidedly primitive and immature as compared with the lofty teachings of Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. These earlier Hebrews stood much closer to the ritual type of religion than did the later prophets; and this is one of the chief reasons for supposing, as many do, that the ritual Decalogue is probably the oldest of the Decalogues found in the Old Testament. It reaches back to the days when a man might say, I shall "come before [the high God] with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old" (Mic. 6. 6). A picture of this religion in action is beautifully illustrated in 1 Sam. 1.

This ritualistic view of religion, while it goes back to most ancient times, does not remain there exclusively, because it is not forgotten as soon as the better form is proposed. Many elements of this character have persisted continuously in religion from early times and are prominent to-day. But in the light of the teachings of the prophets and of Jesus we know that ritual and ceremony can never be the whole of religion, and that the worshiper constantly must be on his guard against supposing that when the ceremony has been performed, his whole duty has been discharged.

THE ETHICAL DECALOGUE

It is in comparison with the ritualistic conception of religion that the more familiar Decalogue reveals its true significance. While ritualistic traits are not wholly lacking even here, the emphasis is quite different. Sacrifices, offerings, ceremonies, are entirely lacking. Instead of these we have an attitude toward Jehovah which places him in the center of affection as well as of obedience. He alone is to be the object of reverence and gratitude. But reverence and gratitude are inner feelings, which may express themselves in a multitude of ways; and this is what

the greater Decalogue calls for, leaving the forms and ceremonies unnoticed. Jehovah is thought of as more concerned with a man's purpose of righteousness than with his outward ritual.

Not only is the whole attitude toward God different, but this Decalogue introduces the subject of a man's relation to his fellows. This the ritual Decalogue wholly lacked. A man can no longer consider that he can please God and at the same time ignore his neighbor. Religion is now revealed as including man as well as God. For this reason this Decalogue is called the ethical Decalogue in contrast with the ritual Decalogue of Exod. 34.

No other passage in the Old Testament is so familiar and so famous, and justly so. "In an age of the world's history when popular religion found satisfaction in an ethically indifferent ceremonialism, in a country where Mosaic sanction was claimed for an elaborate system of sacrifices and festivals, this Decalogue excluded from the summary of duty almost every reference to this class of obligations, and made it clear that what God above all required was justice and mercy."¹ But its importance is not confined to Judaism. In the Christian Church, and especially in Protestantism, it holds a place second only to the Sermon on the Mount and has had at least an equal influence in directing the life of family and state. It is wrought into the very fiber of the institutions of our own country, and in its presence one hears again a voice saying, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." No attempt can be made here to discuss the whole Decalogue in detail; only a few points are referred to and are selected more or less arbitrarily from among the many that deserve study.

ANCIENT LAWS IN THE DECALOGUE

When it was said that the ritual Decalogue represented a more ancient type of religion than the ethical Decalogue, it was not meant that ancient elements are

¹ Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume I, page 582.

wholly lacking in the latter. The sixth, seventh, and eighth deal with matters that concern the simplest society, and one can hardly imagine a time when these acts would not be forbidden. Even Moses could hardly have been the first to forbid murder in the world, or he would not have been afraid after he had killed the Egyptian (Exod. 2. 11-25). This Decalogue shows the dawning of a new spirit, however, in that this prohibition is no longer left to the chance of the criminal's fear of being served in kind by the vengeful relatives of his victim but is brought into the circle of the divine character and represented as odious to God himself.

The same thing is true of the two other prohibitions. They represent very ancient requirements of organized social life which are here brought under the control of definite religious authority. It is held by some that this ethical Decalogue is much later than the days of Moses, and there may be much truth in this view as far as its present form is concerned; but such prohibitions as those of the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments must have been much earlier than the time of Moses. They are among the first matters a primitive society has to provide for. It is worth noting that, as it now stands, this Decalogue seems to be designed for an agricultural people, settled and secure, with well-established ideas of property and property rights. These conditions did not exist in the wilderness, where the Hebrews would necessarily have lived in the same sort of way that the Arabs do who live there now.

KEEPING THE SABBATH

The most significant difference between the Decalogue as it appears in Exod. 20 and in Deut. 5 is in the reason given for keeping the Sabbath. In the one case it is theological and in the other humanitarian. This is in harmony with Deuteronomy, which is alone in forbidding men to muzzle their oxen when treading out the grain (25. 4)—a provision of kindness to animals which is strangely overlooked in 1 Cor. 9. 9, 10.

Equally characteristic of Deuteronomy is the reminder

of the reason Israel had for gratitude to Jehovah. This undertone, heard almost constantly throughout the book, enriches the thought of the sacred day. The deliverance from Egypt is here connected with the Sabbath in a way similar to that in which Christ's resurrection is connected with Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. In this fourth word the Sabbath is a day for rest and for remembrance, and our Christian Sunday might well be more worthily observed if we devoted it to more of both.

This does not mean that the Sabbath laws of the Old Testament should be or were intended to be transferred to the Christian Sunday. The Sabbath is an Old Testament, Jewish day; Sunday is a New Testament, Christian day. Christ himself broke the shackles binding any day to a dead body of legalism when he laid down the principle that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2. 27; see also Rom. 14. 5, 6). Yet many a Sunday would have a richer religious fruitfulness were it marked by more consideration for man and beast and by more of a spirit of sincere gratitude to Almighty God.

THE JEALOUSY OF JEHOVAH

Certain expressions have become so familiar to the ear that they are passed over without challenging the attention of the mind. One of these is in the addition to the second word, where we read, "I, Jehovah, . . . am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing lovingkindness unto thousands¹ of them that love me" (see also 7. 9, 10).

This is not an ancient biblical anticipation of the modern theory of heredity, according to which consequences of parental action descend to children by a law of nature. The welfare or illfare of the ones here re-

¹ Not "thousands of generations." Deut. 7. 9 (Authorized Version) is "a rhetorical amplification, not an exact interpretation" of this statement. It is probably intended to point out that Jehovah's wrath does not extend as far as his mercy.

ferred to springs from Jehovah's feeling of satisfaction or jealousy and is meted out by him directly, and not through the agency of impersonal laws. The idea of such "laws" would have been unintelligible to an ancient Hebrew.

The difficulty a modern Christian feels in this passage arises out of the feeling that because the ancient Hebrew believed his Jehovah to be that kind of a Deity, the modern Christian must believe the same to be true of God. This, however, is not the case. These discussions have already pointed out the fact that while the revelations of God set down in Deuteronomy are profoundly impressive when viewed in the light of their own day, and while some of those views and principles are as rich and as valid now as they were then, they must still be recognized as the thoughts and aspirations of their own time, subject to modification, correction, or even displacement by later teachers, to whom richer and fuller inspiration had been given. God himself did not change, but men's understanding of him did.

According to John 16. 12, 13 there were certain things that even Jesus could not tell to the disciples, not because the things were not true at the time, but because the disciples were not yet able to take them in. Man's whole religious history has been that of a movement toward and of a desire for a larger, truer conception of God. The progress has been slow, and it is only natural that ideas once accepted as true should have to give way from time to time to larger ideas, which, in a later day, men were better able to receive.

"The path of the righteous is as the dawning light,
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

On this particular point of Jehovah's jealous pursuit of generation after generation the Bible itself contains the record of the way that later prophets protested against it and actually denied it as a principle of divine action. In Jer. 31. 29, 30 a prophet had already announced its ultimate failure, but Ezekiel took up the question and in his eighteenth chapter worked out in great detail the defi-

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nite refutation of the idea that Jehovah carried a man's punishment over to the man's descendants. To the enlightened vision of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Jehovah was not that kind of a Deity; and in the light of the still more authoritative teaching of Jesus we might add that for us God is not that kind of a God.¹

THE DECALOGUE'S PLACE IN CHRISTIANITY

The Ten Commandments have long been held up to us as an epitome of all that is necessary as a basis upon which society should be organized; but while it is true that, were the Ten Commandments all observed, society would be much more wholesome than it now is, it should not be overlooked that these Ten Words do not include the best and highest teachings of even the Old Testament, not to mention the New. For its own day, against its own background and amid its own conditions, the ethical Decalogue is a most impressive and a very noble collection of laws. It represents a devotion to God and to righteousness that will always be inspiring. But for Christians—Christians who have not only the loftier and more spiritual visions of the greater prophets but, above all, the supreme teaching and example of Jesus Christ—the Decalogue can never be more than a minimum basis—a “minimum wage,” so to speak—in the great undertaking that looks toward the establishment of the kingdom of God. As Paul said, the law was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ; and the cause of Christ is not served by remaining on a lower level after a higher one has been revealed.

FOR DISCUSSION

How did the original form of the original ten differ from that in which we know them?

What is the general character of the Decalogue in Exod. 34?

Why is it probably earlier than the more familiar one?

¹ Deut. 24. 16 is dealing with man's action toward his fellow man in carrying out legal penalties and does not relate to the question, here involved, of how Jehovah would deal with those who had roused his anger.

How does the familiar Decalogue differ from it?

How would the date of the most ancient elements in the ethical Decalogue compare with the date of Moses?

What type of life does this Decalogue reflect?

What is original in Deuteronomy's version of the Sabbath commandment?

Discuss the difference between Sabbath and Sunday.

How does the second commandment account for Jehovah's favor or anger?

What Old Testament protests are there to the idea that Jehovah punishes many generations for the sins of one?

To what extent is the Decalogue Christian?

CHAPTER X

"SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY"

Deuteronomy 19. 1-10; 23. 24, 25; 24. 10-22; 25. 1-3

AMONG the elements that unite to produce the impression made by the book of Deuteronomy as a whole, none is more interesting or, in a way, unexpected than the note of joy, which is struck over and over again. The Puritan ideal, which has colored much of the religion of our country, has developed an atmosphere of almost forbidding solemnity about all that is related to religion, the church, Sunday observance, Bible reading, and such matters. Furthermore, the ceremonial system of the Old Testament presents itself as so elaborate and so burdensome that we think no Jew could have had much pleasure in his religion. These impressions, however, are unfair to the Jew and probably unfair in some degree to the Puritan as well.

Reference has already been made to the joyous character of the feasts for which Deuteronomy called; but until one has read, for example, in 12. 7, 18; 14. 26; 16. 11, 14, 15 the repeated calls to rejoice, he does not realize the happy, hearty aspect of the religion this book represents. There is no danger of supposing that its religion is mere hilarity—the book is quite too serious for that and contains too much that is severe and exacting—; but the high peaks of religious observance are regarded as high peaks of happiness. This is characteristic, indeed, of the New Testament as well as the Old. Paul's letters are anthems of joy and praise, little as one would suspect it from the forbidding theories of divine action which some earnest but mistaken souls have found in them.

This element of joy is still present in the faith of the orthodox Jew. A Jewish rabbi said once to the writer: "To us the law is not a burden but a joy. You Christians

seem to think that we regard its observance as a hardship, but that is not true. We love the Lord with all our hearts, and it is our pleasure to do all we can to show our love. The words of the Psalm 'I delight to do thy will' (Psa. 40. 8) truly express our own feelings toward the law and its observance."

THE POOR AND NEEDY

Deuteronomy has a special care for three groups of people whose rights are easily invaded or ignored. They are the foreigner who had settled in the land, the orphan, and the widow. The selection of these and the emphasis on their protection throw an interesting light upon the spirit of those who produced the book. They must have had what we should call a real human feeling. Their hearts "went out" to those members of the community who were at a disadvantage through no fault of their own, and they laid down the charge that kindness and good will made up a part of that obligation which the love of Jehovah would evoke in the hearts of his people.

The principle asserted in 10. 18 lays a foundation for all the others. Jehovah himself is concerned that no injustice be done toward them, and that they shall not be left unprovided for.

They are to have a share not only in Jehovah's justice but also in man's joy (16. 11, 14). The two unite when at the feasts the Hebrews are to invite these groups to share in the celebration and its repasts; as much as to say, Jehovah is not wholly satisfied with the observance unless it includes those who are unable to organize a feast on their own account. The social friendliness here represented goes far beyond the formal philanthropies that attend in some degree nearly every form of religion. These Hebrews are not told to send a check or a dinner basket, although these are, of course, excellent as far as they go. They are told in effect, thousands of years before Lowell said it, to give themselves with their alms.

As man's duty looks toward both God and man, so his own deep desire is for both. When the great Saint Augustine wrote his famous "Lord, thou hast made us for

thyself, and our souls are without rest until they find rest in thee," he expressed a great truth; but it was only a part of the truth. We need the fellowship, the companionship, of our brethren. "It is not good for man to be alone." And one of the tragedies of poverty is that it not only means a lack of food, clothing, and shelter, but also a lack of that human fellowship without which no human life can be whole or wholesome. Saint Augustine might truly have completed his statement by saying, "Thou hast made us for each other." Jesus knew this perfectly well when he said that the law and the prophets hung upon the twofold love to God and love to man. And Deuteronomy truly and beautifully anticipates this conclusion when it instructs the Hebrew to present himself before Jehovah as a *sharer* of food, of fellowship, and of joy. It is quite in this spirit that a modern poet has written:

"Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul
May keep the path but will not reach the goal;
While he who walks in love may wander far,
But Christ will bring him where the blessed are."

THE FRIENDLY MARGIN

The same friendly spirit is seen in the direction that one should not wholly strip his field, his vine, or his olive tree (24. 19-22). Do not be miserly and grasping. Do not feel that you must have the last spear of wheat, the last grape, or the last olive.

"There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more;
And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it *tendeth* only to want" (Prov. 11. 24).

This is not recommending carelessness or slovenliness, which are faults far removed from the friendly spirit that hates to be niggardly; it is simply another expression of goodness and mercy.

From 23. 24, 25 it is evident that the friendly spirit is not to be confined to gleaning time but is to operate as a basic principle throughout the season. Apparently, there were no "Keep Out" or "Hands Off" signs. There were

paths through the fields that were practically thoroughfares. A stingy owner might be apprehensive that some of the passers-by might pick a handful of something as they went along. In anticipation of this the direction is here given that one might pick anything he wanted to eat then and there. This is what the disciples were doing when the question was brought up whether it constituted a breach of the Sabbath (Mark 2. 23-28).

It is clear, by the further plans for definite and positive contributions at stated seasons (14. 29), that these friendly provisions are not regarded as adequate to meet the whole situation.

LOANS AND WAGES

Akin to the kindly spirit called for in a general way is the consideration for the poor man who comes for a loan and leaves his cloak as security (24. 10-13). The case is not one of security for loans made with the idea of investment as a money-making proposition but one of poverty and need. In such a case the lender is to recognize a higher law than that of supply and demand. He is not to be governed by financial considerations alone nor take advantage of his neighbor's necessity. Goodness and mercy require that the poor borrower shall have his cloak to sleep in during the night. This is righteousness.

The idea of what constitutes righteousness is constantly changing along with the changing ideas men have of God. Different parts of the Bible, coming from different ages and backgrounds, give different ideas of what God desires. It is a kind of spiritual tonic to read here in Deuteronomy that this friendly, human behavior in a financial transaction "shall be righteousness unto thee." There is no more striking evidence of the way we have separated religion from the daily life than the difficulty we find in thinking of daily acts of the common life as acts of religion which are really our righteousness. It is so much easier to think that real righteousness is performed in church or by contributions to some good cause; but there is no part nor act of life which does not have its relation to true religion and its part in our righteousness. In so

far as religion is confined to certain acts, times, and places, with the idea that its operation is then complete and sufficient, to that extent religion is not only too narrow for the best demands of this ancient book but lags far behind the spirit and teaching of Jesus and fails to cope with its supreme task of infusing man's whole life with the Spirit of God.

The fact that the narrower view finds a place in Deuteronomy cannot be regarded as diminishing the book's significance. The surprising thing is that the larger view finds such definite representation. This larger view could only come gradually, and its wider and wider applications could only gradually appear. It is the glory of Deuteronomy that, along with so much that belonged to the past, it could see at times so far into the future.

Even the matter of prompt payment to a man dependent on the day's wage is made a matter for definite direction (24. 14, 15). Failure to pay promptly in this case is sin, as the return of the pledged garment was righteousness. How deeply this principle entered into the consciousness of the people, at least of some of them, is seen in the reference to it long afterward in Mal. 3. 5 and even in the New Testament in James 5. 4.

CARE FOR THE CRIMINAL

Not only are neighbors to live in friendly relations with one another, but even in the case of crime and punishment care must be taken that the punishment is not carried too far, or that, through excitement and haste, it be not administered to the wrong person. Flogging—that is, beating with a rod—was one of the commonest ways to punish a culprit (25. 1-3); but even the culprit has rights that must not be infringed. Such a sentence is humiliating as well as painful; and while the severity is taken for granted, it may not be carried beyond a reasonable limit. If a man could be flogged indiscriminately, it would be treating him as if he were no better than a brute, whereas reasonable and controlled punishment would not rob him of his native honor as a brother Israelite.

In pursuance of this control it is worth noticing that a

beating may be administered (1) only after judicial hearing; (2) before the judge; (3) to the definite number of strokes imposed by the sentence; and (4) in no case beyond forty strokes. Evidently the situation was one of which a successful plaintiff could easily take advantage, and he must not be allowed to substitute personal desire for vengeance for the administration of a judicial sentence. This would be especially necessary if the offended person held a position of authority. A man in power easily loses all sense of responsibility, and the demand for a full trial was a necessary precaution (compare Jer. 20. 2; 37. 15; Acts 16. 22, 23, 37). Later Judaism, in its fanatical eagerness to keep the law, limited the number of strokes to "forty save one" in order to avoid any possibility of going beyond the law's permission (compare 2 Cor. 11. 24).

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

One of the oldest customs known to history is that of "blood revenge," in which the principle of "a life for a life" has its tragic and chief expression. If a man has been killed, it is taken for granted that his next of kin is under obligation to avenge him by killing the killer. This is regarded not only as a social duty but as a sacred duty. For centuries among the Hebrews it was taken for granted that this proceeding was ordained by Jehovah (Gen. 9. 5, 6).

Deuteronomy does not undertake to abrogate this custom, but it does try to establish safeguards against its abuse (19. 1-10). The provision still stands that when a downright murder has been committed, the murderer must pay for his crime with his life; but a man may be killed accidentally (verses 4, 5), without hate or malice on the part of the slayer. In such a case it must often have happened that "the avenger of blood," "while his heart was hot," would not wait to inquire whether the death had been caused by accident or intention but would assume the worst and act immediately. To forestall such rashness there were places to which a man might flee for protection until his innocence could be established. In earlier

times any shrine was available for this protection. In the shelter of the altar a man was safe from "the avenger of blood" until it could be determined whether he were guilty or innocent (compare 1 Kings 1. 50; 2. 28-35). But one of the most characteristic elements in Deuteronomy is its abolition of the numerous altars to Jehovah in the interest of concentrating all religious ceremonies in Jerusalem. This made the earlier altars unavailable and introduced a complication which had to be provided for. So the six "cities of refuge" were selected for this purpose.

The indication (verse 12) that "the elders of his city" shall send and get the man who had sought a refuge he was not entitled to, is another instance of the spirit of humanity and justice so noticeable in this book. The "avenger of blood," with his "hot heart," must allow cooler hearts to consider the case.

Our daily papers tell us that in our own country a fair trial is by no means assured to every man charged with the crime of murder. The legal provisions that should correspond to the ancient cities of refuge do not always work promptly enough. The national record of feuds and lynchings would bring the blush of shame to the writers of Deuteronomy, and they did not have two thousand years of Christianity behind them. Here, again, they show themselves as true pioneers in the great cause of man's spiritual progress.

THE OTHER SIDE

Careful readers of Deuteronomy will recognize that the instances of goodness and mercy here brought together might at first sight be discounted by the horror of such passages as parts of chapters 27 and 28, where the curses make us shudder. Other statements scattered through the book seem almost vindictive in their severity. It is not intended either to ignore or to excuse these passages. Our task is to understand and to appreciate the true significance of the book, and this cannot be done by any special pleading. It is sufficient to note that:

1. Harshness and severity are primitive traits that have

always been widely, indeed, universally prevalent. The Hebrews came up out of a background of bitterness, saturated with their full share of the traditional cruelty of the Orient. There is nothing new or original in the idea of pronouncing curses or imposing brutal punishments upon members of society who, for any reason, seem objectionable.

2. A teacher, whether he speaks or writes, is great not by virtue of those customs which he accepts and shares with the people of his time but by virtue of those ideas which are new and different. The spirit of goodness and mercy in Deuteronomy is one of the elements of novelty and of progress in which the book strikes out a different path from any that previous or contemporary practice would suggest. It is on this basis that the originality and significance of the book must be estimated.

3. The anathemas of Christian creeds and the religious persecutions that have stained the pages of Christian history are a tragic tribute to the persistence of cruelties quite as severe as anything proposed in Deuteronomy. "He that is without sin . . ., let him first cast a stone" (John 8. 7).

4. The true comment on Deuteronomy, in both its aspects, is the fifth chapter of Matthew, in which it is quite clear that Deuteronomy truly anticipated the message of Jesus and in so doing received its all-sufficient glorification.

FOR DISCUSSION

To what extent is Deuteronomy's view of religion one of joy and gladness?

How is care for the needy definitely connected with formal religion?

How is the friendly spirit to be shown in the fields?

How can "business" become "righteousness"?

How does the treatment of the criminal reflect the humane spirit?

What is the significance of the cities of refuge?

Is the "goodness and mercy" in Deuteronomy nullified by its severity? Why?

CHAPTER XI

THE SONG OF MOSES

Deuteronomy 32. 1-43

QUITE different from anything so far considered in Deuteronomy is the striking "song of Moses" in chapter 32. This long poem reflects a time when the nation is oppressed, but when the prophetic poet sees a vision of wonderful deliverance not far off. He looks back upon the distant past and sees Israel's journey through the wilderness. He looks back upon the settlement in Canaan and the prosperity that followed; but he sees that Israel could not stand prosperity. She turned to other gods and in consequence was visited with famine, pestilence, and, finally, war. She was overthrown, scattered, and on the verge of destruction, when Jehovah, seeing that Israel's defeat would be his own, determined to come to the rescue, delivering his people and overthrowing their foes as he had done in the ancient days of Moses and Joshua. This triumph, however, will far exceed the former one, and the nations will stand in awe before the greatness and power of Israel's God.

It is thus a song of encouragement tempered with reproof, its theme being the greatness of Jehovah, Israel's "Rock," as seen in his care for Israel and his supremacy over other gods. It is a type of song not unlike some of the Psalms (for example, 78 and 106), and if we had found it originally in the book of Psalms instead of in Deuteronomy, we should have felt that position to be quite natural and appropriate. It is not impossible that it may have been taken out of some collection of songs and psalms and placed in Deuteronomy in much the same way that selections were taken from "the book of the wars of Jehovah" (Num. 21. 14) and from "the book of Jashar" (Josh. 10. 13; 2 Sam. 1. 18) and introduced in appropriate places.

This poem is like other great poems in that it does not yield its content and spirit upon first reading. A great work of music or painting or poetry may be simple in some respects, but that does not make it immediately obvious and intelligible to the casual listener, observer, or reader. This is especially true of the greatest literature of all—the Bible. While passages may be found which are so simple and direct that they have something to give to everybody, the Bible would not be the great work it is if it made no demands upon attention, information, and reflection. This constitutes a real difficulty to those who are unwilling or unable to spend time and serious thought upon it. A further difficulty is presented by its form of speech and the character of its ideas. These are more or less foreign to the people of the Western, English-speaking world. The trouble is not only with the formal language of our common English versions, although this offers some difficulty, but even more with the background of custom, scenery, and ideas which, while native to the Hebrew, is wholly foreign to us.

These difficulties are not insuperable, and with patience and attention one may enter with considerable success into the rich world of praise, of prayer, and of preaching which the Scriptures offer. For this reason it is urged, just at this point, that the following notes be read with an open Bible alongside them. Still better would it be if, before going further, one should turn to Deut. 32 and read the song two or three times over as a kind of introductory approach to closer examination. This having been done, one's first thought is, perhaps, "What is it all about? Of whom speaketh the prophet this?"

THE ROCK OF ISRAEL

The opening appeal to the heavens and the earth would seem perfectly appropriate to a Hebrew (verses 1, 2). His feeling toward the physical universe was very different from ours. To him the heavens and earth were almost like living things who could testify to the words of men, as here, or to the words of Jehovah (Isa. 1. 2). This appeal would indicate the poet's idea of the greatness

of his theme. He will utter a song worthy of being heard throughout the world, one that will be as cheering and as refreshing as the gentle rains from heaven.¹ This leads him at once to his high theme: "The Name of Jehovah" (verses 3, 4).

For the Oriental a name meant more than it does with us. It was not simply a label but stood for the nature and character of the person or object it referred to. A person's "name" was simply another way of saying himself, his spirit, his chief concern, what he stood for. A great character could have different names representing different aspects of his interests or activities. The name was thus looked upon as of great importance, and the Hebrew thought of Jehovah as having, in addition to his special and basic name, Jehovah, different special names.²

This poem exalts Jehovah under the name "Rock"—a term that seems to have been used of other deities as well as of Jehovah (verses 30, 37; and compare Isa. 31. 9), but which expressed for the Hebrews a particularly precious aspect of Jehovah's attitude toward them. A concordance or reference Bible will show that this name as descriptive of Jehovah occurs with surprising frequency in various parts of the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms. The idea it stood for could not be better stated than in Isa. 25. 4, where, though the word itself does not appear, Jehovah is described in his qualities of "the rock of Israel's stronghold" (Isa. 17. 10).³ The proclamation of the name in this song goes beyond the thought of mere power and partisanship in that it represents Jehovah as his people's shelter and unfailing reliance, not only because he is great and mighty, but also because he is just and faithful. In him right and might unite. The heavens and the earth may well hear the proclamation of such a God!

¹ Compare Shakespeare's "quality of mercy" in Portia's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*.

² See, for example, Gen. 32. 24-30; Exod. 3. 13-15; 6. 3.

³ The reverence of the English translators led them to use a capital R for the word "rock" when it referred to Jehovah, and a small r when it referred to a god of Israel's enemies. This is misleading when, as in verse 30, they mistook the one reference for the other.

THE NATION'S FALL

Over against the rocklike faithfulness of their God the poet places the weak "no-faithfulness" (verse 20) of the people. He rebukes them for their perversity and stupidity. He bids them consider the meaning of their historic experiences (verses 5-7). And then, in a highly poetical passage (verses 8-14), he portrays vividly the way Jehovah had "found" Israel in the wilderness, had "kept him as the apple of his eye," and had led him to the lap of luxury. Of particular importance is the point that during that time Israel followed no foreign god, Jehovah was the only Leader (verse 12).

But prosperity kindled pride,¹ and pride led to a growing neglect of Jehovah in favor of other gods (verses 15-18). Israel became enamored of what we might call new fads in religion. It takes only a slight fancy to picture the popularity of the new forms and objects of worship, which the fathers had not known, but which the children looked upon as the last word in religious proprieties. Ease and idleness invited and always invite a search for some new way in which a spirit that has lost the urgency of its original imperatives may be thrilled once more. Social novelty was often reënforced by political prudence in making way for the worship of the gods of Egypt or Assyria or the nature gods of Canaan. There is no more constant element in the teachings of the great prophets than this one of rebuke against those who have turned aside from Jehovah to worship other gods, and our poet has here compressed into a dozen lines the basis and the burden of this betrayal of the national faith.

He is sure he knows how Jehovah must have felt about it and with true prophetic daring sets down the very words he thinks Jehovah might have spoken (verses 19-27). The sweep of the passage carries us along so irresistibly that we do not stop to consider the motive which is ascribed to Jehovah as the cause of Israel's dreadful descent along the path of famine and pestilence to war and captivity,

¹ Immediately preceding verse 15 the ancient Greek version adds the significant line: "Jacob ate and was full."

as well as of the unexpected and undeserved rescue that follows. This motive is jealousy—jealousy of other gods when Israel turns from his God to them, and jealousy lest Israel's downfall should seem to Israel's foes as due to the weakness of Israel's God. It is not a great and noble jealousy for the welfare of others, which may exist along with utter forgetfulness of self, but a jealousy that is wholly self-centered.

It is not necessary to evade or to modify the conception of deity here set forth. It is a view of God that can be held and has been held by men of very sincere and beautiful character. They have even tried to explain how divine jealousy and human jealousy are very different things. If that were true, it would seem that the human jealousy were the more forgivable; for *jealousy exists only where there can be competition*. The idea of a jealous Deity is a survival of the days when men believed that other deities really existed by whom their own deity might conceivably be overcome. A God who is really supreme in wisdom, love, and power could not be jealous for at least two reasons: (1) because of his own loving nature, and (2) because there would be no competitor of whom he could be jealous. It would be difficult to imagine that our Lord Jesus Christ ever thought of his heavenly Father as a jealous God in the sense in which that expression occurs in the Old Testament, and in such a matter Christ must be our Guide.

Whatever may have been the poet's thought of the divine jealousy, there is no doubt that his song comes from a time when he and his people had experienced one calamity after another, and now felt themselves to be on the brink of annihilation (verse 26). They had endured the horrors of invasion and had suffered the bitterness of defeat. The night was closing in upon them. And then, suddenly, there broke upon the prophet-poet's heart an inspired ray of hope. If the people have nothing to offer which might persuade Jehovah to save them, perhaps he will save them for his own sake (verse 27). The hope brightens into assurance—and the song is born! The poet, as Paul wrote of himself long afterward, had been

“perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4. 8, 9.)

JEHOVAH’S VICTORY

At this point the poet ceases to speak in the words of Jehovah and continues in his own person (verses 28-33). Scornfully, almost bitterly, he turns to Israel’s foes and tells them what he thinks of them. He says in effect that they were foolish and blind, or they would have seen far enough to realize what the upshot would be (verses 28, 29). How could a mere handful of Hebrews have scattered a host of the enemy (as had sometimes happened) if it had not been that Jehovah had stepped in and organized victory for his people? The God that would do this would do more. These foes had trusted in a “rock” that was no rock; they had been “sold.”¹ They have to admit it (verses 30, 31). They are in the same class with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were both foolish and wicked, and whose folly and wickedness wrought their downfall.

As a sentence of doom hanging over them, continues the prophet, he has in his treasury (verse 34, margin) of inspired visions one in which Jehovah has shown him that he will exact from the oppressor a full recompense for all they have done (verse 35). At the last moment, when the foe thinks his victory secure, and Israel thinks his case wholly lost, Jehovah will arise and intervene in Israel’s behalf (verse 36). But this is only half of the story the prophet has to tell. He will “proclaim the name of Jehovah” (verse 3), and his main purpose is to exalt Jehovah alone above the alleged gods of those who had for a time conquered Jehovah’s people. He does this most dramatically by once more representing Jehovah himself as speaking.

The two passages in the poem which are given as the words of Jehovah mark the ends of the first and second parts into which it falls. The first part closes with the sentence upon faithless Israel, and the second part closes

¹ “Their rock” refers to the enemy’s god in verse 30 as well as in verse 31.

with the impassioned proclamation of Jehovah's absolute power and sovereignty as over against the "not-Gods" (verse 21) of Israel's foes (verses 37-42). There is something at once thrilling and terrible in the impetuous onward rush of this brief passage. In words that burn and smite the prophet pours out his scornful mockery of the gods that were honored but impotent, and his vehement exaltation of the God who, single-handed, works his sovereign will. There was in his heart "as it were a burning fire" that would brook no suppression (Jer. 20. 9).

It is unfortunate that so many of these personal backgrounds of the Bible are unconsidered; unfortunate that the Bible is so easily regarded as having no necessary relation to human life and experience. Yet as soon as one permits himself to look between the lines into the hearts of the men who wrote them—hearts that, now fierce, now tender, now hopeful, now despairing, lived the eager, intense lives that these words reflect—he finds his own heart strangely warmed with a glow unfelt before. He begins to realize that he is in the presence of men who, at their soul's peril, fought their way through darkness to light, from defeat to victory. The lifeless letters on the pale pages of a printed book are a poor substitute for the actual presence of the creative spirits themselves; but sympathetic imagination and a willing mind can go far toward clothing these records of the past with the garments of reality. When this has been done, the so-called teachings of the different writers are seen in their true light as challenges and ventures of faith thrown out beyond the bounds of familiar truth into the larger background of truth that is yet to be revealed. This invites and justifies perfect freedom in the discussion of any of the prophetic words. If it reveals attitudes and ideas that fall below the level of later Christian teaching, it shows quite as clearly the splendid advance those pioneers of faith were constantly making over many ideas that had satisfied the faith of their predecessors.

This is illustrated in the view here so passionately uttered—that Jehovah is superior to all other gods. Such vigorous assertions are not needed and are not made unless

there is a fear that some people are seriously believing the contrary. This is by no means the only Old Testament passage that reflects a discussion of this subject.¹ The position taken by Deuteronomy that there should be only a single shrine was but one step toward the conclusion that there must be only a single God. This conclusion was not drawn immediately, however. Many Hebrew teachers were to arise before it was clearly seen and definitely stated that this was the ultimate goal for true religion; and many generations would pass before the people at large would accept the truth these teachers proclaimed.

Some of these lessons were learned under the pressure of bitter and disastrous experiences. It seemed at times that the people had to die before they could rise into the larger life. They made "stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things." And no one victory could guarantee that a new one would not be necessary tomorrow. God spoke "in the prophets in divers portions and in divers manners." Each one of them thought as wisely, believed as firmly, dared as bravely, as he could, and then passed on, leaving others to go still farther along the path he had trod. It is in this great progress of the truth of God that this noble "song of Moses" finds its place and shows its power.

Out of the bitterness of a nation's fall there came a revelation of Jehovah's victory in terms not only of defeated enemies but of a faith that asserted one God, and one alone. Here one stands in the awe-inspiring presence of monotheism in the making. The great truth was not fully grasped at the moment, it was not yet released from associations with lower conceptions that are now seen as incompatible with it; but *it had been seen*—that was the great thing. It was there, and it was there to grow until the earth should be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11. 9). In this sense what this prophet did was what all prophets were doing, and what you and I in our measure may do: proclaim the name of the Lord!

¹ Compare Isa. 30. 27-33 and many passages in Isa. 40 to 55, such as 44. 6-8.

FOR DISCUSSION

What are some conditions necessary to an appreciation of the song of Moses?

How does the appeal to heavens and earth fit the Hebrew idea?

What significance did the Oriental see in a name?

What ideas did "Rock" stand for?

How had Jehovah's favor to the people been shown?

How does the writer indicate Jehovah's determination to punish Israel?

Why should a Christian discard the idea that God is jealous?

On what idea does the writer base his hope for deliverance?

With what religious teaching is the song especially concerned?

CHAPTER XII

OUTLINE AND ORIGIN OF THE BOOK

THE traditional way of regarding the Bible is to view it as if it were a splendid crystal, without flaw or blemish. If a fragment should be chipped off, or a crack started, the crystal would be ruined. This view is giving way more and more, however, to one that might be represented under the figure of a tree, which, as it grows from seed to sapling, necessarily changes its form as well as its size and discards in later stages what earlier stages found essential. In this view life and growth are the determining factors, and the Bible is seen to reflect the life and growth of a people who deeply yearned for God and for righteousness.

Translating the figure into fact, the Bible takes its place in history as itself a part and parcel of that history; and the task of the Bible student thus becomes not one of chipping off a bit here or a bit there, so that by discarding certain fragments a perfect central nugget of truth may be reached at last, but simply of distributing the various parts so that each shall find its place as near as possible to that point of historic progress whence it arose, or which it records. The last thing the modern Bible student wants to do is to dispense with any part of the Bible; he merely seeks to place it in the history in which God gave it and to understand the life out of which it came.

To one who has never approached the Bible in this way the first impression is of a daring, even reckless, freedom on the part of those who do so study it; but one soon realizes that these students, though free, are at the same time no less reverent because they try to be thorough and exact. The difference between some of their results and some of the more familiar views is due to the fact that the latter were formulated by men who, though ear-

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nest and devout, neither knew nor cared about questions of history and of historic growth, but who pressed the Bible into the service of immediate religious interests of their own time. The more recent method of study has already been rich in results, throwing a flood of light upon many a page of the Bible which was formerly hopelessly obscure, and making the whole Bible a "living word" in a sense undreamed before. It is in sympathy with these enlightening results that a few of the salient features of Deuteronomy are indicated in the present chapter.

OUTLINE

The unique character of Deuteronomy as seen in its teachings appears also in its form. There is no other book just like it in the Old Testament. It consists of speeches, laws, and poems, with a few brief bits of narrative here and there. After a short passage that may be regarded as a title (1. 1-5) there come two long passages in the form of speeches by Moses (1. 6 to 4. 40; and 5 to 11). The main body of the book (12 to 26) consists of "the statutes and the ordinances." Then come some more (but shorter) speeches (27 to 30), which bring the book practically to a close. There follows, however, a sort of appendix (31 to 34), in which are brought together a few more words of Moses, two striking poems, and the account of Moses' death. This appendix forms a suitable close not only for Deuteronomy but for the whole Pentateuch, and perhaps it was so intended.

THE BOOK'S MANNER OF SPEAKING

The book has a highly characteristic phraseology. It is fond of piling up word on word as if to give the fullest possible expression of the thought, as, for instance, in 4. 9, 34; 6. 7; 10. 12, 17; and 11. 1. It has a vocabulary all its own. Any good Bible dictionary or commentary will give lists of words and phrases that occur frequently in Deuteronomy and rarely or not at all elsewhere. The student who wishes to catch something of Deuteronomy's characteristic language should read the first eleven chapters a few times until they begin to be fairly familiar,

and then, at a further reading, underline (preferably with a colored pencil) the expressions that, by their frequency, have impressed themselves upon his mind. After doing this (not before) let him consult a list of characteristic expressions as given in some good commentary, and he will find that, on the basis of his own reading, he will have reached some of the same results as the commentator. If the two do not wholly agree, it will be nothing against the student's effort, for his work will have been on only a third of the book and based on a translation, whereas the commentator presumably has worked thoroughly over the whole book and has based his work on the original Hebrew.¹

This sort of work is not a mere word game but is important for at least two reasons: first, it is a first step toward discovering the relation one Bible book has to another, or that different parts of the book itself have to one another. If there are differences between books or sections of books in the words used or in the way the same words are used, it is probable that these differences go back to the book's origin or purpose, or both. If, however, no such differences appear, there would be equal probability that the different books or different parts had a similar origin.

It would hardly be possible, for instance, that one could be blind to the differences between an essay of Ruskin's and one of Carlyle's, or between a poem of Tennyson's and one of Robert Browning's even if they were given him without the writers' names. Indeed, if no differences were noticed, it might well be doubted whether such an undiscerning reader would be able to get any true message at all from any one of them. He might *feel* that he got something, but what he got would be more his own fancy than their meaning. Yet differences quite as noticeable as these appear in the Bible unrecognized by many who want to know the Bible and who think they do.

¹ An instructive exercise for a class would be to have each member prepare a list of six or eight expressions in Deut. 1 to 11 which, on the basis of his own unaided reading, strike him as most characteristic and then compare these lists at a class session.

A second reason is that words are signs of ideas; and when we find in chapter after chapter a recurring group of words and expressions, it is clear that these represent ideas with which the writer was especially concerned. Expressions such as "Jehovah our [thy, your] God," "the God of our [thy, your] fathers," "to love God," "to go after other gods," "statutes and judgments," "remember," "forget not," show a particular interest on the part of the writer. Such terms are our first and best clues toward finding out the deepest message of any writer, including the writers of the Bible; and Deuteronomy is particularly rich in words, phrases, and ideas so striking and characteristic that wherever they are found, even outside the book itself, one recognizes them at once as Deuteronomic.

DIVERSE POINTS OF VIEW

The recurring expressions, however, are not the only items to be considered. Taken by themselves, they give the book an appearance of unity that other contents tend to dispel. For instance, according to 2. 14 "all the generation of the men of war" that had come out of Egypt had died thirty-eight years after that event; but according to 5. 2-5 and 11. 2-7 Moses, shortly before his death (the whole book is represented as a sort of farewell address), is supposed to be addressing the same Israel that had made the covenant with Jehovah at Sinai. Then, there are the curious and frequent changes from plural (your, you, ye) to singular (thou, thy, thee) and from singular to plural, as, for example, at 1. 20, 21 (both forms in the same verse—2. 24). In this connection it may be noted in passing that the expression "fear not, neither be dismayed" (1. 21) is always found with the singular form, while the plural expresses the same idea by the words "Dread not, neither be afraid" (verse 29). Further, it is surprising, after the rather elaborate title at 1. 1-5, to find another one equally elaborate at 4. 44-49 and still a third at 6. 1-3 (note the plural in verse 1 and the singular in verse 2).

These are only a few out of a host of facts to be found in the book, whose examination would carry us far beyond

the limits of our present study. They are mentioned simply as samples of the sort of thing that a careful study of the book reveals, and which must be known in some degree before one can suppose that he knows the book. Such facts have, of course, the closest possible bearing on the book's origin and history. They immediately raise the question "How are such facts to be accounted for?" and it is the desire to answer this question which has led many special students to devote a great deal of study to this unique book.

DOES THE BOOK COME FROM MOSES?

The idea that the book was written by Moses has been so long taken for granted that many have supposed it to be stated in the book itself; but, as a matter of fact, the book represents itself to have been written about Moses rather than by him (1. 1; 4. 41, 44; 5. 1; and many other places throughout the book), and it was early noticed that Moses could hardly have been expected to write the account of his own death in chapter 34. It seems strange that the expression "beyond Jordan" should be used in a way that shows the writer to be already in Canaan, the "Promised Land" west of Jordan which Moses did not enter (1. 1, 5; 3. 8; 4. 41, 46, 47, 49). The three other occurrences of this phrase (3. 20, 25; 11. 30) in a way to suit the location of Moses east of the Jordan do not lessen the difficulty.

Not only do we find these confusing statements of place but some equally confusing as to time—statements that look back upon the days of Moses as on a distant past (2. 12; 3. 8).

Another item bearing on the relation of Moses to the book is the statement about the law that was given to all Israel at Sinai. According to Deuteronomy (4. 13; 5. 22) the covenant with the people consisted of the Ten Words only ("he added no more"). The people were too frightened to hear more, so Moses alone received the further commands (5. 25-33). He did not deliver these to the people until, from the country of Moab, they were about to cross the Jordan into Canaan, and it is these that

form the Deuteronomic Code (12 to 26). In contrast to this we find in Exodus the statement that the original covenant at Sinai consisted of a long, detailed code (Exod. 20. 23 to 23. 19), which was written out and submitted to the people, who in their turn accepted it then and there (Exod. 24. 4-8). However the divergence between these accounts is to be understood, it would hardly seem possible that both should have come from the same person.

Deuteronomy's emphasis on a central shrine, "a place which Jehovah shall choose . . . to put his name there" (12. 5 and elsewhere), points significantly to a time later than that in which Moses lived. Exodus (20. 24) expressly sanctions a multiplicity of altars, and the history even represents such leaders as Samuel, Solomon, and Elijah as building altars and sacrificing at many places (1 Sam. 7. 5, 6, 9, 17; 1 Kings 3. 4; 18. 32; 19. 10).

To put the matter very briefly (and very incompletely) the main lines of evidence take two directions—one negative and the other positive. The negative line leads to the conclusion that there is so much about the book foreign to all we know about Moses and his period that it did not come from him. The more one tries to imagine a great leader presenting to a people a mass of laws so many of which, in the nature of the case, could have no relation to the situations existing when those laws were proclaimed, the less credible such an action seems. Such a procedure might conceivably have been carried through if the people had previously known the Old Testament as we know it, so that they could follow it out as one follows a pre-arranged program; but such a supposition is of course absurd. A man as wise as Moses would know perfectly well that a people who could not look far enough into the future to trust in Jehovah and to rely on Moses even while Moses himself was alive to lead them would be utterly unable to concern themselves with a code of laws which would be applicable only in an indefinitely distant future. The Hebrews were not puppets but people, "real folks," and just about as much and as little interested in the future as we are, ready to try something new if not too difficult and if not too different from what we are

accustomed to, but quite unready to take any interest in proposals that have no bearing (as far as we can see) on our own situation.

The positive line of evidence leads to a particular point in Old Testament history at which a book appears as a decisive factor in an epoch-making event. That event was the reformation under Josiah in the year 621 B. C., an account of which is given in 2 Kings 22, 23. The account turns about a book that, not because of the way it was found, but because of its contents, leads to a radical reorganization of the national religious system. When one compares the "commandments, and statutes, and ordinances" of Deuteronomy with the account of what Josiah actually did, on the authority of the "book of the law which was found in the house of Jehovah," he is quite prepared for the opinion held by so many Old Testament students that the book that appeared at this time was none other than the book of Deuteronomy itself. While its discovery in the Temple would not necessarily mean that it had not been written by Moses, it contains so much that is plainly later than other writings that, on independent grounds, are recognized as themselves much later than Moses that its composition probably came at a time not long preceding its discovery.

Out of all these facts and as a result of years of discussion there has come the conclusion that the book of Deuteronomy comes from the period between Isaiah and Jeremiah, approximately between 700 B. C. and 650 B. C.

THE CONTENTS COVER A LONG PERIOD

This does not mean that the entire contents of the book were new in that period. Many of the laws it contains must be very ancient, far older even than the time of Moses. They represent customs common to all Semitic peoples, such as the law punishing murder (19. 11-13) along with its closely related "eye for eye," etc. (19. 21), the power of parents over children (21. 18-21), the authority of local and tribal elders (16. 18-20; 17. 8-13), and systems of sacrifice (15. 19-23); but it gathers these together and places them, in addition to later ones, under

the control of the single shrine, at the same time infusing the whole with a spirit as powerful and as characteristic as it was new.

MOSES BELONGS IN THE BOOK

Why, then, it may be asked, should the book so definitely speak in the person of Moses and present itself as though it came from his time? Did the writers mean to deceive people and, by a kind of pious fraud, persuade men to adopt a plan they would otherwise have opposed? Questions of this kind would never have been asked in the days the book appeared. Literary proprietorship had not begun to be regarded as of any special importance. The point was not so much *who* wrote or *who* said as *what* was said and what line of teaching it belonged to. In the same way that the name of David stood for sacred song, and the name of Solomon for wisdom, so the name of Moses stood for law. And just as a Hebrew would have had no hesitation in attributing a Psalm to David or a proverb to Solomon, so he would have felt no impropriety in attributing to Moses any law or group of laws which fell in line with all he knew of Moses the great lawgiver.

The literary method that placed in the mouth of Moses the speeches that appear in Deuteronomy is followed in a great many cases elsewhere in the Old Testament. "In the books of Joshua, Kings, and Chronicles speeches are quoted as if they were the very words of early leaders in Israel, which nevertheless betray their composition by the historian himself through being in the same style as the narratives in which they occur and containing phrases and even ideas that are distinctly late."¹ They are no more forgeries than the speech of John Adams (at the signing of the Declaration of Independence) *written by Daniel Webster*.

The book is thus a significant testimony to the position and influence of Moses. He himself must have laid the foundation for the persistent Hebrew practice of ascribing to him successive law codes, no matter how new and

¹ *Deuteronomy*, by G. A. Smith, page cxi.

late some of their enactments were. Nor is it to be supposed that these later laws and writing just "happened" in some mysterious way. They were produced by men of spirit akin to that of the great prophet-lawgiver himself. Understanding the book in this way one not only sees Moses in a richer light but, in its advancing revelation, recognizes a fulfillment of its own promise that in later days prophets of the Mosaic line should teach the people the further will of God (18. 15-19).

FOR DISCUSSION

What seem to you to be the most characteristic expressions of the book?

Why is a study of words and expressions of a biblical book important?

What examples do you find of the book's diverse points of view?

State the negative and the positive grounds for regarding Deuteronomy as later than the time of Moses.

What is your conclusion as to the date of Deuteronomy?

In what sense is the book Mosaic?

CHAPTER XIII

"LEST WE FORGET"

IT is not at all impossible that when Kipling wrote his famous "Recessional" he had in his mind the echo of Deuteronomy. It is the great poets and writers who often seem to have the deepest appreciation for the Bible, and there is no doubt that Kipling knows it well. Perhaps the phrase was his own, as far as he knew; but its occurrence in Deuteronomy long preceded its use in his poem. It serves well as a starting point for a glance back over our brief studies in this "copy of this law" (17. 18). It is at once an appeal and a warning and finely represents the whole book in that it addresses itself to man's spirit and attempts to evoke a spiritual response. While this attitude is especially prominent in the part of the book in which the speeches occur it is not entirely lacking even from the laws.

It is really surprising to see how many times the phrase itself occurs (4. 9, 23; 6. 12; 8. 11, 14, 19; 9. 7); and along with it one can imagine the undertone of feeling revealed in the passing word that, though Israel may forget, Jehovah will not (4. 31). Not content with warning the people against *forgetting*, the writer urges them to *remember* (5. 15; 7. 18; 8. 2, 18; 9. 7; 15. 15; 24. 18, 22); and when the two expressions are taken together, one finds himself at once in the atmosphere of earnestness and persuasiveness which helps to make this book unique.

Many things in Deuteronomy deserve to be remembered. The four topics here selected are only a few of them, not by any means a complete list.

JEHOVAH ONLY

It has long been recognized that one of Israel's greatest messages for mankind is the message of monotheism

—that is, of one God, and one God only, for all the universe. It is a great message and represents one of the highest thoughts men can have of God. The idea that back of all being there is One who created all things seems an almost inevitable goal of faith. Even when the word “God” is avoided, the principle is recognized. When a philosopher speaks of “an infinite and eternal energy whence all things proceed,” the devout Christian responds, “Yes, my God is at least that!” When a scientist speaks of a “great first cause,” the believer responds again, “Yes, God is at least that!” When a great teacher speaks of “a Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness,” the Christian again recognizes the echo of his own faith. To the disciple of Jesus, God is all these and more.

A man’s thought of God, however, is always closely related to that world in which a man supposes himself to be living. Until one has caught the vision of a real universe, his thought of God can hardly claim universality. When a man’s thought of his world extends only fitfully and vaguely beyond the limits of his commerce and his conquests, he easily thinks of his God as belonging to his own nation. Indeed, he feels himself to be the prey of other gods than his own when these other gods seem to survive in conquered territory (2 Kings 17. 24-26) or when they invade his country from without (1 Sam. 5).

The progress toward a true monotheism begins in the days when men believe in many gods. It proceeds through the conviction that for one’s own nation there is only one supreme deity. Belief in this single deity for the nation moves out to include other nations and deepens with the enlarging view of the world. Finally, in the modern world, where men have learned to think of a true universe, the divine supremacy is recognized as pervading and controlling that universe, and men reach the conception of monotheism, properly so called. In such matters men’s minds move slowly. Each age did the best it could in its time and is not to be scorned because it did not rise to the levels reached by its successors. Loyalty to present truth alone makes possible the prophets, who, by their inspired vision, are able to point men to higher ground.

Deuteronomy takes its place in this movement, representing the stage at which prophetic souls are proclaiming to their people what, for them, was a new spiritual discovery—namely, that *Jehovah was the only God for the Hebrews*. This is asserted positively over and over again, and also negatively in the warnings against “other gods.” This last point alone is enough to show that at the time Deuteronomy was proclaiming this principle, the people were still under the influence of the earlier belief in many gods. Deuteronomy’s protest against them and its claim for exclusive allegiance to Jehovah unite to form one of the book’s most conspicuous teachings, and one in which is seen most clearly its own originality as contributing to the progress of religious faith.

It is in this connection that the concentration of worship at a single shrine is seen in its proper perspective. From our later standpoint we can see that its establishment contained elements of serious difficulty and some that were, indeed, impossible of fulfillment; but the fact remains that Jerusalem and especially the Temple did become the earthly center of historic Judaism, and in this result Deuteronomy was an important factor. The only shrine became a visible symbol of the only Deity.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RETRIBUTION

Closely related to the fact of a single Deity is the important question of his nature: “How will he act toward me?” On this second topic Deuteronomy is as explicit as on the first, so explicit, in fact, that the world (that is, as much of it as receives the Bible) is still under the influence of its answer. It is not easy to divest one’s mind of the teachings of ages and to imagine a time when such a teaching had not yet been given; yet that needs to be done if one would appreciate something of the power of this Deuteronomic principle.

Like the other teachings, it must be placed in its background of history. Taken by itself, it appears crude and harsh to an unwarranted degree; but back of it lie two important factors:

First, the idea of the covenant, of which Deuteronomy

makes so much, did not originate in this book. It is one of the things the book takes for granted. It is impossible to tell just how ancient it was. Hosea, who, according to the view in our previous chapter, preceded Deuteronomy, presents the covenant idea under the special figure of the marriage relation—a figure adopted by many subsequent writers. The essence of the idea is that between Jehovah and his people there existed a relation involving obligations on both sides. It was mutual. The people were Jehovah’s not only because he had conquered them or created them, but because the people themselves had agreed to be his. This placed upon them not only the obligation of obedience, which might be imposed from without, but equally the obligation of loyalty, which could come only from within. It was out of this principle as a seed that the great prophets later developed those high ethical standards which are their undying glory.

Again, as the Deuteronomic writers looked back upon the history of their people they saw both failure and success, defeats as well as victories; and perhaps at the very time the book was being written there was the threat of impending disaster. Yet the people were Jehovah’s! Did Jehovah have seasons when he was not able to cope with his adversaries? They could not think that! Yet the only way to meet the future was to find some clue to the past. They needed, if the term be not too modern, a philosophy of history.

One can imagine the awe with which, in the course of some heart-searching discussion, a prophet’s heart felt the sudden illumination—“the covenant.” There could be no question of Jehovah’s fidelity, but what of the people? *They had broken the covenant*—not finally and forever, but from time to time, with only a fitful faithfulness to their great Partner. The answer, as soon as uttered, seemed so complete, so adequate, that, as a whole countryside is lighted up on a dark night by a flash of lightning, so, with almost blinding brilliance, the whole past was seen in a light that gave every event its place and meaning. They had their philosophy of history. Defeats, famines, pestilences, national disasters of any kind, were

now seen as necessary accompaniments of faithlessness; while national welfare accompanied religious loyalty.

This is the principle of retribution, in virtue of which, in its broad applications, one understands that when he does well, God rewards him; and when he does ill, God punishes him. In the light of later inspired teaching this principle does not apply as universally as was at first supposed. It leaves whole areas of life and experience unconsidered; but there are at least three good reasons for its acceptance, then and now:

1. It is simple and easily grasped; and we crave simplicity, especially where things essentially mysterious are concerned. We are hungry to know about God and about the motives that may be supposed to animate him; and if the answer can be given in terms the simplest minds can understand, that is the answer we want. This answer meets this requirement. It reflects the way we ourselves act. What could be more natural than that God should act the same way?

2. There are many cases it seems to cover quite well enough for all practical purposes. It suits the rough-and-ready type of justice, which down to the present day has been regarded as satisfactory. "Let the thief, for instance, suffer the penalty of his crime"—whatever, for the time being, we think that penalty should be. "Let *him* that stole *steal no more*" is a judgment from another world. Indeed, our whole penal system is shot through with this principle of retribution. Small wonder that men regard God as obeying it! It is this principle that has cast the awful shadows of men's belief in a God of anger and revenge.

3. When first proposed it covered the ground as no theory had done before. It supplied a key to all mysteries of Israel's past. In the masterly way in which it immediately rationalized the field of history it was an anticipation of the later cosmic principle of cause and effect, which to-day is a fundamental necessity for all our thinking.

When it is remembered how this theory of retribution has dominated men's thought of God ever since it was first

enunciated, and when it is realized that Deuteronomy has given this principle its classic statement, one is inclined to think of Deuteronomy as the most influential book in the world.

“WHEN ISRAEL WAS A CHILD, I LOVED HIM” (Hos. 11. 1)

No book in the Old Testament so breathes the spirit of these words as does Deuteronomy. It is not only in explicit statements but in all sorts of indirect allusions that many of its chapters are suffused with an earnestness of love which seems more like the New Testament than the Old. There is nothing in the book more characteristic than the way this spirit of love, like a gorgeous veil, is thrown over the references to Israel's defections in the wilderness. By the time Deuteronomy came to be written, it was felt that, despite Israel's lapses and despite the fact that they justified Jehovah's anger, stronger than his anger was his love. This feeling tended to idealize and to glorify the whole tradition of the Mosaic age. There is something wistful in the way later generations came to think that in the wilderness Jehovah's love and Israel's loyalty had full sway (Hos. 2. 14, 15; Jer. 2. 2, 3). More and more the later teachers yearned for the close ties of loving fellowship between Jehovah and his people which is Deuteronomy's beautiful ideal. If the Deuteronomist had lived in Paul's day, he might have written the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians.

This principle of love was as new and as illuminating as the principle of retribution. The two do not necessarily contradict each other. They may cause awful conflicts in the heart of the individual who must act in obedience to one or the other, but it would not be more difficult in that ancient day to believe that Jehovah was actuated by both motives than it has been for countless believers ever since to believe the same thing. In asserting that Jehovah loved his people Deuteronomy was proclaiming a new relation between the two—one that went deeper even than the mutual obligations of the covenant. It is the glowing wonder of this revelation which glorifies

the book. All its applications were not seen at first, but it had been proclaimed and would never be forgotten. "Jehovah loveth you" only anticipates the deeper New Testament word, "God is love."

PRIEST AND PROPHET

Life does not present itself to us in the abstract; it always takes on some form. The life exhibited in the plant and the animal is subject to the limitations of its embodiment. The life of the spirit also expresses itself in some form or other; only so can it come to action in daily life. This dual principle of spirit and form, involving the dependence of one on the other, is represented in the two figures of priest and prophet. The splendid ideals of the prophets come to nothing until embodied in society; but the prophets themselves are not the men to do the necessary work of teaching and organizing: their gifts lie elsewhere. This slower and less spectacular work is for priests. The "word" of the prophet is the seed from which grows the "law" of the priest (Jer. 18. 18). In the promulgation of any particular teaching the prophet comes first and then the priest follows. Both are necessary: the prophet to inspire and the priest to inform.

Attention has already been called to the presence of these two elements in Deuteronomy. The book is not primarily a book of prophecy but a book of law, but a law surrounded with the glow of the prophetic spirit. This is another of its unique aspects. It unites laws with reasons and motives for keeping them. If the laws take up more actual room in the book than do the prophetic passages, that is only true to life. The prophet's word is like the blast of dynamite which shatters the rock (compare Jer. 23. 29): it acts in a moment and with tremendous power. But before that rock can be transported and shaped for building purposes or crushed and treated for the extraction of precious metal, slow processes must be brought into play which will use power carefully distributed and applied. In the life of the spirit the prophetic words have shattering power; but their application, their incorporation into the actions of men, takes time and teaching.

John Wesley illustrates the process in his General Rules. No one can read these without realizing that Wesley had come down from the prophetic heavens to walk the lower levels trod by the plain people. He told them in definite detail just what they should do and what they should not do, translating into practical programs the inspired prophetic principles. In this he was doing the work of the priest and he saw how necessary it was. This gives Deuteronomy a very practical aspect. The priest is not only one who makes practical applications: he is also the special guardian and preserver of the heritage of the past. Much of the impatience that finds expression in criticism of conservatism is probably justified; but to go so far as entirely to cut loose from the past, to ignore history, and to try to start with a clean slate is not only impossible, it is also shortsighted. Our only reliable clue as to what men will do is a knowledge of what they have done. Lacking that, a man is like an ocean steamer without anchorage, drifting helplessly at the mercy of wind and tide. The priestly element in Deuteronomy looks toward practical applications on the basis of a preservation of the values of the past. True, some things were preserved which do not now impress us as of great value, but that does not contradict the principle nor does it prove that there were not values then which we to-day cannot wholly appreciate.

In principle, then, as a combination of the spirit of both priest and prophet, Deuteronomy is eminently practical in its position, representing two sides of life which belong to each other but which are often urged singly at each other's expense.

CONCLUSION

These four topics just mentioned are respectively (1) theological, (2) philosophical, (3) emotional, and (4) practical. Together they make a goodly message, and an impression upon a serious reader that deepens upon acquaintance. Out of such a rich field it is not easy to select words or sayings that might epitomize the whole; but one would come close to the spirit of the book if he should choose as its keynote the following passages, com-

binning as they do the priestly "law" and the prophetic "word":

"AND NOW, ISRAEL, WHAT DOTTH JEHOVAH THY GOD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO FEAR JEHOVAH THY GOD, TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS, AND TO LOVE HIM, AND TO SERVE JEHOVAH THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF JEHOVAH, AND HIS STATUTES, WHICH I COMMAND THEE THIS DAY FOR THY GOOD?" (10. 12, 13).

"FOR THIS COMMANDMENT WHICH I COMMAND THEE THIS DAY, IT IS NOT TOO HARD FOR THEE, NEITHER IS IT FAR OFF. IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN, THAT THOU SHOULDEST SAY, WHO SHALL GO UP FOR US TO HEAVEN, AND BRING IT UNTO US, AND MAKE US TO HEAR IT, THAT WE MAY DO IT? NEITHER IS IT BEYOND THE SEA, THAT THOU SHOULDEST SAY, WHO SHALL GO OVER THE SEA FOR US, AND BRING IT UNTO US, AND MAKE US TO HEAR IT, THAT WE MAY DO IT? BUT THE WORD IS VERY NIGH UNTO THEE, IN THY MOUTH, AND IN THY HEART, THAT THOU MAYEST DO IT" (30. 11-14).

FOR DISCUSSION

What is meant by monotheism?

How is this related to a man's thought of his world?

Through what stages does the idea advance?

What is Deuteronomy's place in the movement?

What two historic ideas lie back of the principle of retribution?

Why has this principle been so widely held?

How does Deuteronomy present the love of God?

What are the distinctive fields of service of the priest and the prophet?

Why are both necessary?

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